

THE RELIGIOUSNESS OF VIOLENCE

The XIXth World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions will take place in Tokyo, 24–30 March, 2005. The general theme chosen for the congress is one that has imposed itself on our discipline with disturbing urgency during the last few years: “Religion: Conflict and Peace.” Historians of religions today rightly feel that it is their duty to contribute to the understanding of the complex relationships between religion and violence. As a prelude to the Congress, this issue of *Numen* is devoted to the theme “religion and violence,” containing articles by scholars who approach the theme from various perspectives and using different kinds of data.

Few subjects arouse more controversy than the connections between religion and violence, the controversies being due to the assumption that such links are either apparent or illegitimate. In the first case, it is claimed that it is not religion itself which is the cause for violence, but rather that the label “religion” is being used to validate economic, political or other interests. In the second case, even when it is assumed that it is religion itself that is at the heart of violent acts, it is still claimed that such involvement goes against the very nature of religion, constituting in fact its betrayal. In both cases, “religion” is understood, first, as having definite boundaries and, second, as having to do with inwardness, with transcendence or, more often, with the connection between the two. A proper treatment of these issues would require an examination of current debates about the possibility and even the desirability of providing a definition of religion,¹ as well as

¹ Compare the positions advanced in two recent works: Hans G. Kippenberg and Kocku von Stuckrad, *Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft*, Munich: Beck 2003, 8; and Giovanni Filoramo, *Che cos'è religione: Temi, metodi, problemi*, Torino: Einaudi 2004, 77ff.

of the claim that “religion” is a Western creation² — an examination that cannot be undertaken here. What may be pointed out is that the anxiety about the status of “religion” is not restricted to the academic world; this is shown, among other things, by the tendency to replace “religion” by “faith” in ordinary speech. Indeed, functioning as the bridge between inwardness and transcendence, “faith” has become the term that has supplanted “religion” in everyday, but also in journalistic and political, language — “faith” being used to refer to a “religion” freed from spurious uses and illegitimate associations, above all those having to do with violence.

The preeminence of “faith” in English (and of “Glaube,” “foi,” etc.) seems to constitute but the logical conclusion of the process of differentiation and dematerialization of religion that characterizes modernity,³ as well as an extreme case of the tension between orthodoxy and orthopraxy studied by Steve Bruce in his contribution to this issue of *Numen* devoted to religion and violence. Bruce postulates an orthodoxy — orthopraxy axis, with religions that emphasize faith, such as the Protestant versions of Christianity, at one end and those, such as Islam and Judaism, that seek to create a righteous environment within which a proper life may be lived, at the other. According to Bruce, religions concerned with the creation of a righteous environment are more likely to give rise to religiously based violence, whereas those concerned with right belief tend to look with suspicion at totalitarian models of society. The replacement of “religion” by “faith” in the West would seem, then, to constitute one further step away from the concern with orthopraxy, a development which would account for the rejection on the part of Western countries of religiously legitimized violence.⁴ Bruce’s suggestion needs to be tested

² This is the conclusion reached independently in Daniel Dubuisson, *L’Occident et la religion: Mythes, science et idéologie*, Bruxelles: Complexe 1998; Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies*, New York and Oxford: OUP 2000; Dario Sabbatucci, *La prospettiva storico-religiosa*, Rome: Seam 2000.

³ See Gustavo Benavides, “Modernity,” in Mark C. Taylor (ed.), *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, Chicago: UP 1998, 186–204.

⁴ The United States constitutes an anomaly in this and in many other respects, an

against orthopraxical religions such as Hinduism as well as against the long periods of Shi'ī history during which quietism and dissimulation were the rule. In principle, however, Bruce's hypothesis, along with his "other things being equal" clause, provide a fruitful point of departure for examining examples of religious violence. Taking some of the issues raised in Francisco Diez de Velasco's article as an example, one can ask whether his call to learn "to live in a progressively multireligious and multicultural world respecting the richness of diversity, while at the same time seeking some minimally consensual point of view," does not presuppose considering religion as belief rather than as the attempt to create a righteous environment — for is it not the case that righteous environments cannot as a rule coexist? The tension between orthodoxy and orthopraxy can also be used to address Diez de Velasco's point about the situation of Muslim immigrants in Spain. He writes that "the shock of being a minority in the newly adopted country may lead to violence as an escape from this contradictory position." The crucial question is whether such contradictory position would lead to violence in the case of Buddhist or Hindu immigrants: are the reasons for violence to be understood purely in structural terms or should one take into account the peculiarities of the religion in question?

But however central religious rebellion or warfare may be to the mythical or historical foundations of a tradition — be it the extermination of the inhabitants of the lands granted to the Israelites by their god or the defeat of the enemies of nascent Islam — this type of violence cannot be compared to the recurrence and ubiquitousness of sacrificial practices.⁵ One therefore welcomes the treatment of sacrifice in most of the contributions to this issue of *Numen*. From Torkel

anomaly that cannot be understood without taking into account the potentially dangerous messianic component that pervades US self-understanding.

⁵ In addition to the literature cited in Cristiano Grottanelli's article, see Richard Schenk (ed.), *Zur Theorie des Opfers: Ein interdisziplinäres Gespräch*, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstadt: Frommann-Holzboog 1995; Bernd Janowski and Michael Welker (eds.), *Opfer: Theologische und kulturelle Kontexte*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 2000.

Brekke's discussion of the sacrificial nature of battle (*yuddhayajña*) as expounded in the Bhagavadgītā, to Diez de Velasco's consideration of the sacrificial aspects of the attacks on New York on 11 September 2001 and on Madrid on 11 March 2004, to Hans Kippenberg's exegesis of the role played by liturgy and ultimately by sacrifice in the self-understanding of those involved in the New York attacks, to Cristiano Grottanelli's examination of the sacrificial ideology — whether political, cosmic, purificatory or nationalistic — present in Mircea Eliade and Ernst Jünger, but also in Ignaz Maybaum, killing and dying appear as having a redeeming, foundational function. Disturbing as it may be to those accustomed to the anti-sacrificial attitude that seems to characterize late modernity religion, engaging in violence, sacrificing oneself and others, far from being a betrayal of religion constitutes its core.⁶

THE EDITORS

⁶ An issue left unexplored is whether the violence found in the legend of Master Manole, studied by Eliade in a book published in 1943 (Italian translation, *I riti del costruire*, 1990), is not in the end about appropriating someone's labor, rather than on violence per se. For analogous myths dealing with the interplay between violence and work, see Paul Sartori, "Über das Bauopfer," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 30 (1898) 1–54; Giuseppe Cocchiara, "Il ponte di Arta e i sacrifici di costruzione," *Annali del Museo Pitagorico* 1 (1950) 38–80.

RELIGION AND VIOLENCE: WHAT CAN SOCIOLOGY OFFER?

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Summary

This essay presents a sketch of a sociological approach to the study of possible links between religion and violence. It aims to avoid two unhelpful positions: the structural social science that denies religion causal status and explains everything by circumstance and the popular commentary that gives too much weight to very specific religious ideas. It suggests that instead of trying to explain rare and exotic political action we look for possible links between large abstract features of religious traditions and key features of the culturally-produced social backgrounds which inform how large groups of people orient themselves to other groups, to the issue of individual rights, and to the legitimacy of the state. The example of the involvement of Protestant fundamentalists in the political violence of Northern Ireland is used to illustrate this approach. The refusal of such fundamentalists to engage in holy war is explained by a combination of circumstances and religious ideas.

Introduction

In the 1960s it was quite possible to suppose that religion, like nationalism, was a spent force and that social scientists need not take either of them seriously as a powerful source of social and political identities. Even those who did not share the Marxist vision of class displacing other sources of social action assumed that secularization had diminished the power of religious ideologies. Fewer people adhered to them and those who did increasingly accorded religion a narrow reach: something for the family, for the weekend, and for those parts of personal behaviour with little social impact. There is no need to rehearse the events of the last 40 years that have corrected that mistaken view. It is now obvious that many people (even in the liberal affluent democracies of the West) continue to view religion as a powerful source of social and political values, contend against the side-

lining of religion, and create imagined communities that attribute important characteristics to a person's religion. Certainly at the level of reporting what people say about their actions, religion now frequently figures. US voters choosing a senator, Palestinians explaining suicide bombing, Russian legislators drafting a new constitution; religion is an agenda item.

This does not, of course, mean that it is causally effective. Nor does it tell us precisely how religion should be fitted into an explanation of behaviour. Even if we avoid structuralist explanations that by-pass entirely the reasons and motives of actors, that political actors say they are motivated by their faith does not end the matter. What people say about what they do has a variable relationship to their real motives. They may act for a base motive (a desire for material advantage, for example) and consciously dress their actions up in something they think sounds more honourable. They may be blind to the real roots of their behaviour: their faith may only be one component of a larger motivational package (and a small one at that). Or it may indeed be the primary cause. That a young Muslim says he plans to become a suicide bomber because he wants the promised virgins in heaven does not mean that the analyst has to take that at face-value and try to explain why Irish Catholic republicans in Northern Ireland do not sacrifice themselves in the same way by reference to differences between Islam and Catholicism. While what people say about themselves is a good place for the social scientist to start, it is rarely the place to stop.

Attempts to use religion to explain anything (especially anything reprehensible) provoke strong responses in the academy. On the one side we have scholars such as Samuel Huntington who build a theory of international relations around the supposed differences between religions and their propensity to cluster in increasingly antagonistic "civilisations" (Huntington 1997). On the other side we have the popular "orientalism" criticism promoted by the late Edward Said (1991, 1997), which suggests that almost any attribution of social and political effects to religious traditions is both inappropriate and an additional form of oppression. The orientalism criticism has been answered

at length elsewhere (Bruce 2004) and all that needs said in these preliminary remarks is that we must, of course, make sure that we attend to both internal differences within religious traditions and to similarities between religions but that avoiding the sin of essentialism need not strike us dumb. There is a vital distinction between saying (a) that the world's major religious traditions have more in common with each other than is sometimes recognised and contain considerable internal variation and (b) that there are no systematic differences between religions. If we accept that there are real differences between, say, Protestantism and Catholicism (that can be known both by examining the official positions of churches and by polling and observing large samples of Protestants and Catholics) there seems no reason to rule out the possibility that such differences have important social and political consequences. We can go further and say that it would be a remarkable social institution that could absorb so much of people's time and energy and not have major consequences. Hence I take the critique of orientalism as a methodological warning, not as a fundamental barrier.

The purpose of this essay is to use one case study of the links between religion and political violence to illustrate what a sociological approach has to offer in this field. The case concerns the involvement of the Revd Dr Ian Paisley MP, MLA, MEP and his evangelical followers in the Northern Ireland Troubles. It draws on 25 years of study of Northern Ireland (Bruce 1986, 1992) and in particular on intimate knowledge of the two worlds discussed here: Ulster evangelicalism and loyalist terrorism.

Sociology

One contribution that sociology can make to the debate about the relationship between religion and violence is its comparative method. Two sorts of comparison can move us beyond merely reporting what people say about their actions. We can compare religious and non-religious people in a particular setting: for example, are pious Protestants in Northern Ireland more or less likely than "heritage" Protestants to

support the use of vigilante violence? And we can compare the actions of adherents to different religions in apparently comparable settings: are attacks by Hindus on Muslims in India more common than attacks by Catholics on Protestants in Northern Ireland? Of course, the crucial point in such comparisons is the “other-things-being-equal” clause. That religious communal hostility in France is confined to the vandalism of gravestones while in India it creates the need for new graves may be better explained by the stability of the French state and the effectiveness of French policing than by reference to the religions in question. This is the valuable point of Said’s critique: we should be wary of attributing differences in levels of communal violence to differences in the ways religions encourage or legitimate such actions where there are obvious and more proximate differences in the extent to which environments encourage or permit certain courses of action. Given that we cannot construct controlled experiments to test the relative power of possible variables we must engage in careful and critical comparison of actually-occurring events.

The second sort of contribution concerns the nature of explanation. Most people assume a deliberate action model in explanation: things are as they are because someone (“them”) wished it so. They also have short time-scales and narrow reaches. Hence one of the most useful contributions of sociology is to act as a corrective by searching for indirect, inadvertent and unintended causal connections. Right or wrong, Max Weber’s Protestant Ethic thesis is a good example of the method. In trying to explain economic attitudes in Britain and America in the early nineteenth century he did not look at what church officials then said about the desirability of acquisitiveness. Instead he looked further back and wider to argue that a number of earlier Reformation teachings that had nothing at all to do with economic behaviour combined to create a number of socio-psychological problems which in turn created a certain persona. That persona combined with this-worldly asceticism to produce, again inadvertently, the Protestant Ethic.

If the stress on the inadvertent distinguishes sociology from the history of ideas, the next point distinguishes it from journalism. It is

both a limitation and a considerable strength of sociology that it is not good at explaining rare events. What is obvious of statistical tests for the strength of correlation between variables (that they work best with actions that are relatively common but not dominant) is true of sociological explanation more generally. We can trace and hope to explain relatively common patterns of behaviour; we are far less successful with the extremely unusual, the idiosyncratic, and the very specific. For example, we can offer plausible explanations in terms of motives and opportunities for the social class correlates of the distribution of certain crimes but we cannot explain why, of a large group of people with similar social characteristics, only some commit crimes. The virtue of this limitation is that it cautions us against making too much of precisely those events that most attract the interests of journalists (and the general public). I will return to this point later but I enter it here as a general reason for preferring to shift from the very specific (for example, why do Muslims use suicide bombing?) to the more general (for example, do religions differ in their attitudes to the state?).

The Case Study: Protestant Fundamentalists in Northern Ireland

Ian Paisley is remarkable in the history of modern democracy for founding a political party and a church and leading both to success (Bruce 1986). The party he founded in 1966, initially called the Protestant Unionist Party, then the Democratic Unionist Party or DUP, is now Ulster's major unionist party (i.e., in favour of maintaining Northern Ireland as part of the *United Kingdom*). The Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster (FPCU), which he founded in 1951, now has 109 congregations. Paisley's political career has been built on defending the right of the Protestant people of Ulster to remain part of the United Kingdom and on opposing demands from Irish nationalists for the territory of Northern Ireland to be integrated with the Republic of Ireland. His religious career has been constructed around the claim that the main Protestant churches have abandoned their historic creeds and hence that separation from Protestant apostasy is necessary to

defend the true faith against the encroachments of Catholicism and liberalism. The two are united by the belief that northern Irish nationalist demands are a product of Catholic Church scheming and are encouraged by the decline of a biblical Protestant witness. What makes Paisley's twin careers particular interesting for my purposes here is that it would not be difficult to construct a justification for an evangelical holy war or *jihad*.

- The Northern Ireland conflict has seen a great deal of political violence: almost 4,000 people killed in a country with a population of only 1.5 million.
- Ian Paisley's core evangelical Protestants see themselves as the victims of a holy crusade by the Catholic church to destroy one of the last strongholds of Protestantism in Europe.
- Traditionally, evangelicals have believed that Catholicism is a damnable heresy. Ulster evangelicals believe that the crusade of Irish nationalism to integrate Northern Ireland into the Republic of Ireland is just one instance of the Catholic Church's desire to reverse the Reformation and restore Rome's hegemony over all of Europe.
- The centuries-long conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Ireland has encouraged Ulster Protestants to see themselves as a threatened elect, just like the Children of Israel.
- Every political change in Northern Ireland since its creation in 1926 (but especially since the start of the current conflict in 1970) has weakened the power of Protestants.
- In its most brutal form, the anti-Protestantism of the republican movement has taken the form of murdering Protestants in the border areas; as result Protestants have moved north and east and become concentrated in an ever smaller area. Although militant Irish republicans often assert that they attack only agents of the British state, that category is defined so widely that many Protestants see their entire religio-ethnic group as being under attack.
- And there have been enough examples of straight-forward sectarian murder to make such an assessment plausible. For example, in November 1983, republicans murdered three church elders when

they attacked the Darkley, County Armagh, Pentecostal Church during a church service.

- Finally, there is a circumstantial point. Especially in the early years of the Troubles the state was not in effective control. The ease with which each side could attack the other gave ample opportunity for people to feel justified in taking the law into their own hands.

In that situation it would not be hard for those who saw themselves as the victims of a religiously-inspired war to respond with a religious justification for counter-attack. Did Ulster evangelicals engage in *jihad*?

Paisley's Words

Paisley's stated attitude to political violence is clear enough. Like most people in western democracies, he expects the state to protect its citizens and those citizens to be loyal to the state. He cedes to the state the right to the legitimate use of coercion. Although Paisley frequently cites the Scottish Covenanters as an inspiration, he does not hold to the view that support for the "civil magistrate," to use the Covenanter term, should be conditional on the state actively promoting the true religion. So long as the state delivers its secular protection, the citizen has no right to use violence for political ends. The following from a 1973 statement succinctly expresses his view:

it is wrong for Protestants to contemplate taking the law into their own hands and meting out justice to those whom they believe guilty of atrocities . . . "Avenge not yourselves" is the unmistakable teaching of Scripture. Romans 12, verse 19, goes on to remind Christians that "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." This does not mean, of course, that Protestants ought not be ready to defend themselves, their homes and their families from attack. It does mean that the punishment of offenders must and should be left to those holding official authority to judge and punish (*Protestant Telegraph* 17 February 1973:5).

If the state abandons the citizen then the citizen is released from his obligation and may do what is necessary to protect himself, his family and his country. Clearly there is a lot of slack in deciding just when the state has failed but the principle is clear and is clearly

opposed to the terrorism used by loyalist groups such as the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) (on which, see Bruce 1992).

It could be that Paisley is a hypocrite and that his actions belie his words. But despite the best efforts of his many critics, no credible evidence has ever been offered to link Paisley with the terrorist acts of loyalist paramilitary organizations. It could be that, while his hands remain clean, Paisley has deliberately encouraged others to commit terrorist acts. Again, there is no evidence that he has and his response to acts of terror committed by Ulster loyalists — the people on his side — has been unequivocal. In response to one of the first loyalist terror acts, in 1966, Paisley said: “Like everyone else, I deplore and condemn this killing, as all right-thinking people must” (Bruce 1986:79). He has since repeated that sentiment over and over. For example he said: “What really stuns the decent Ulster Protestant is that a section of his own community would engage under the guise of Protestantism and Loyalty in crimes just as heinous and hellish [as those of the IRA]. As a Protestant leader I once again totally, utterly and unreservedly condemn these atrocious crimes and those who perpetrated them or planned to perpetrate them” (*BBC Northern Ireland News* 26 October 1982).

The Evangelical Record

One way of trying to assess the consequences of Paisley’s rhetoric (and of the impact of the religion that inspires him) is to examine the behaviour of the members of his Free Presbyterian Church. If evangelical Protestantism legitimates political violence, we might see this in the denominational affiliations of those convicted of serious offences. Allowing for turn-over, by resignation or death, Paisley’s Free Presbyterian Church has probably had about 10,000 adult and male (the two main demographic characteristics of terrorists) members since 1966. That is a lot of potential terrorists. Apart from the small group of men who in the early 1960s tried to dramatise the threat from the IRA (then fairly dormant) by damaging public utili-

ties, I can find only two Free Presbyterians who have been clearly involved in terrorism. Membership of other evangelical sects is probably less likely to be mentioned in press reports but as most loyalist terror activity has been the work of the UDA and UVF, data on the religion of their members (which I will come to in a moment) can stand as a fairly complete assessment of the violence of evangelicals. We can reasonably conclude that committed evangelical Protestants have not been involved in political violence to the extent that their presence in the general population would lead them to be if religion was irrelevant.

If his church is blameless, what of Paisley's party? Again it is hard to know how many adult male members the DUP has had over the course of the Troubles but even if we confine our attention to those active enough to have stood as candidates in elections, we would have to set a figure of at least 500 and given the considerable turnover as people move in and out of parties, the cadre could be much larger; let us guess 1,000. I can find only six DUP activists who have been implicated in serious crimes and none of them involved personal murderous attacks.

There are two sorts of episodes that put Paisley and his supporters close to political violence: associating with terrorists in largely legal activities and advertising for violence under specified conditions.

In 1974 Paisley, like every other Ulster unionist politician, supported a general strike that was led by the UDA and UVF. Although there is no suggestion that he or his people approved of UDA and UVF men using intimidation to enforce the strike, he must have been aware of it. Three years later he again worked with loyalists to mount a second and this time unsuccessful strike. It is worth observing Paisley's own conduct in that strike. As though he had been stung by accusations of mixing with hoodlums he did his best to defuse potentially violent situations. At one confrontation between a large picket and the police, Paisley arranged with the police that they should try to move him, he would resist and then allow himself to be arrested. He would thus make his point and acquire the necessary media coverage. In

recognition of this choreography the rest of the picket would disperse quietly. There was no violence. But however properly Paisley and his people behaved, they must have known that the UDA and UVF were responsible for hundreds of sectarian killings yet they were willing to associate with them.

Paisley has also come close, in rhetoric at least, to rejecting the state's monopoly of violence. Four times in his long career, Paisley has tried to organise a militia. His very first Ulster Protestant Volunteers was a political rather than a paramilitary organization but its name and structure were intended to remind people of the original 1912 Ulster Volunteer Force. In 1969, Paisley reacted to the disbanding of the Ulster Special Constabulary by calling on members to form a private militia. In 1981, after the British and Irish governments signalled a new closeness in their relationship, Paisley launched what was called the Third Force (the police and the army being the other two). Paisley took five journalists to a secret location in North Antrim to see 500 men in combat jackets wave what were purported to be certificates for legally-held firearms. At another rally he announced: "We have a choice to make. Shall we allow ourselves to be murdered by the IRA, or shall we go out and kill the killers" (*Belfast Telegraph* 31 July 1981). As usual there was much militant rhetoric. At one rally Paisley said: "We demand that the IRA be exterminated from Ulster . . . there are men willing to do the job of exterminating the IRA. Recruit them under the Crown and they will do it. If you refuse, we will have no other decision to make but to do it ourselves" (Cooke 1996:192). That rhetoric was qualified when he later said: "This force proposes to act entirely within the law and will in no way usurp either the work or the activities of the crown forces" (*Irish News* 18 December 1981). There was no fighting. The rallies gradually got smaller and the movement died. Five years later Paisley agreed to lead a new third force called Ulster Resistance. There were the usual mass meetings with much hot air: Paisley's deputy said: "Thousands have already joined the movement and the task of shaping them into an effective force is continuing. The Resistance has indicated that drilling and training has already started. The officer of the nine divisions have taken up their

duties” (*Irish News* 10 July 1986). The reality was quite different. There was no mass movement. Ulster Resistance dribbled away to leave a small handful of County Armagh loyalists who collaborated with the UVF and UDA in the bank robbery in Portadown in July 1987 to fund a large purchase of arms from South Africa. Two Resistance men, both DUP activists from the same area and members of Paisley’s Free Presbyterian Church, were caught trying to swap a Shorts missile system for small arms with the South African state company Armscor.

Despite the lack of evidence some people persist in claiming that Paisley secretly supported paramilitaries. A 1999 book review in *Socialism Today* repeated the assertion that Paisley encouraged the formation of the UDA and UVF and cited as evidence the statement supposedly made by one of the first UVF men convicted of murder (in 1966). Hughie McLean is quoted as saying: “I am terribly sorry I ever heard of that man Paisley or decided to follow him. I am definitely ashamed of myself to be in such a position.” This single quotation has been endlessly and uncritically repeated (for example, Marrinan 1973:114; Moloney and Pollak 1986:138; Cooke 1996:149) without anyone pausing to think if those words were likely to have been spoken by an uneducated Shankill Road man. Had anyone bothered to check they would have found the implausibly articulate statement was attributed by the police to McLean, who vehemently denied making it. We now have available a number of biographies of leading UDA and UVF men (Sinnerton 2002; Garland 2001; Lister and Jordan 2003) and none of them give Paisley any sort of foundational influence. On the contrary, they show clearly that loyalists despised Paisley for apparently wishing the ends but not being willing to support the means. Far from being taken as distant support for their efforts, the real terrorists scorned Paisley’s third force efforts. As one now senior UVF man said: “Waving fuckin fire arms docketts! Fuckin joke. That boy was just an embarrassment.”

If the above clears Paisley and his core evangelicals of direct involvement in, or active support for, political violence, we can consider if in less direct ways evangelicals bear some responsibility for loyalist

terrorism. It could be argued that by frequently eliding Catholicism and Irish republicanism, by constantly construing political events as a struggle between good and evil, and by encouraging unionists generally to maintain hard line positions, evangelicals bear some responsibility for creating a climate in which others feel justified in using terror. Without wishing to dismiss that entirely, I would point out that it is a little partisan to suppose that only some of Paisley's pronouncements are causally effective; that those sentiments which can be taken as encouraging communal tension are noted by loyalist terrorists while his abundantly clear denunciations of vigilante violence are somehow overlooked.

Pursuing the idea of exploring the link between religion and violence from the other end, we can ask what proportion of admitted loyalist terrorists are born-again Christians. I have spent 25 years studying loyalist paramilitaries. Out of thousands of men involved I can think of only two who were evangelicals before they got involved and one of them candidly told me he thought he would go to hell for what he did. Looking for religious inspiration more widely, we can note that, although a few of the first generation of UDA and UVF men retained a vicarious association through their wives ensuring their children went to Sunday school, even such a thin attachment to organized religion is entirely absent from who have grown up in the Troubles. For example, the well-researched biography of Johnny "Mad Dog" Adair, a UDA leader from the 1990s, makes no reference at all to religious sentiment or activity (Lister and Jordan 2003).

The one exception makes the point: the two leaders of a very small group which operated under the banner of the Orange Volunteers and the Red Hand Defenders claimed divine inspiration and in July 1998 fire-bombed a number of Catholic churches. Their religious inspiration was highly deviant: they were British-Israelites and Paisley and other Free Presbyterians (such as the Revd Ron Johnston of Armagh) had frequently criticised the heresy of British-Israelism even before that association became known. This point will be pursued shortly but one of the main reasons evangelicals such as Johnston oppose British Israelism is because it makes race rather than individual standing with

God the criterion for salvation. The group was also rejected by the main loyalist paramilitaries as, to quote a leading UVF man, “a bunch of cranks. Grade A headbangers. We wanted nothing to do with the mad bastards.”

Two subsidiary points are worth mentioning. First, far from being seen as justifying paramilitary violence, evangelical religion is seen by loyalists themselves as justification for former members to “stand down.” A number of former terrorists became Christians while in prison and their former comrades accepted that as a good reason for disaffiliation. One East Belfast commander of the UDA was deposed for supposedly informing on the organization and stealing its funds. Conventionally he would have been murdered (or at the very least severely wounded) by his successors. He was not and the explanation was that he had become born-again and was now an associate pastor of a pentecostal church. As one of his former men put it: “I never trusted that lying bastard. He’s safe for now but if we ever find out he’s faking he’s booked into Roselawn [the local cemetery].”

Second, although Paisley’s people have far too much respect for their leader to criticise him in public, there is widespread unease within the Church about the sordid nature of politics. In private many Free Presbyterians have told me they would rather “the Doc” was not involved in politics and instead working full-time to save souls. That this suspicion of the unGodly nature of the public world is not mere rhetoric is suggested by the careers of those leading Free Presbyterians who are politically prominent. Because outsiders tend to use Paisley to judge his twin movement it is little appreciated that, although all Free Presbyterians would vote DUP, those ministers called to pastor the largest and most prestigious congregations are those least politically active; indeed the leading church men are unknown outside the Church.

To summarise the above, if any Protestant fundamentalists were to engage in holy war it would be those of Northern Ireland. In South Africa and the United States, the enemies of those who wish to see themselves as a beleaguered Children of Israel were defined by a variety of characteristics (race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, liberalism, secularity and so on) that were hard to meld into a single religiously-

defined threat. In Northern Ireland the true believers could plausibly see themselves as the victims of the anti-Christ. Despite considerable provocation and opportunity, even the most politically involved of Ulster's conservative Protestants have not engaged in or endorsed political violence.

Religion as a Variable in Political Action

If the above can be compressed into the proposition that evangelical Protestant piety inoculated people against the appeal of the notion that their situation merited a violent response, then we can move on to my more general concern: the differential potential of religions to legitimate political violence. Much current popular discussion of Islamic fundamentalist violence either states directly or assumes that Islam is particularly violent. Bruce Hoffman, for example, follows a discussion of what characterises religiously-inspired terrorism by saying: "These core characteristics, while common to religious terrorists of all faiths, have nonetheless often been most closely associated with Islamic terrorist groups" (Hoffman 1998:95).

As this is a topic where strong feelings encourage myopia and misreading, I should stress that I am thoroughly familiar with the very many examples that can be produced of Christian people and Christian church leaders promoting the use of violence for political ends. We do not need to go back to the crusades or to Europe before the Treaty of Westphalia to find Christian holy wars. In almost all national wars involving Protestant majority states in the twentieth century, churches, denominations and sects supported the use of armed force. Ulster evangelicals in particular have a long tradition of participation in the British armed forces. It is also easy to find many examples of atrocities committed by members of religio-ethnic groups where the religion in question is Catholic or Orthodox Christianity. A florid example can be found in the behaviour of the Croat fascist Ustaše, which carried out a vicious campaign of genocide against Serbs in 1941. Many Catholic priests were active in the Ustaše, the Pope granted an audience to its leader Ante Pavelic, and Orthodox priests were singled out

(some 130 were murdered). Serbs retaliated in kind. When that battle was re-visited in the 1990s each ethnic group mobilised religious symbolism and religious heritage to legitimate their violence against the other. In one memorably tacky example, the Bosnian Serb press agency in Pale circulated to the world a photograph of Radovan Karadic and Ratko Mladic (respectively the political and military leaders of the Bosnian Serbs) kissing the communion cup held by the Orthodox Bishop. The leader of the notorious Serb Tigers, Arkan, was often photographed wearing an enormous Orthodox crucifix. We can allow that much of this deployment of religion was entirely cynical but still be left with enough sincere commitment to refute the proposition that Christianity and Islam differ hugely in their attitudes to the use of violence *per se*.

An Aside on Apocalypticism

It is worth saying something about one possible reason for supposing that religions differ either from each other or from secular belief systems in their propensity to encourage or legitimate violence: the expectation of impending apocalypse. We can certainly note that there erupt from time to time, and in a wide variety of contexts of social despair, movements based on the belief that the world is about to end and that violent attacks on some group or class will help hasten the end: the Fifth Monarchy Men in the English Civil War (Rogers 1966) or the Mahdists in the Sudan in the nineteenth century are cases in point. Without wishing to explore this in detail, I would suggest a number of reasons why messianism be left to one side in this discussion. First, there are secular millenarian movements (fascism and communism being two notable examples) which generate considerable violence (for example, the radical end of the French revolution, Stalin's decision to starve the Ukraine and Hitler's genocide of the Jews). Second, apocalyptic movements are as likely to generate pietistic retreats from the world (as the expecting-to-be-saved remnant cleanse themselves to be worthy of salvation) as they are to stimulate violent acts to hasten its end. And even when they are attended

by violence, it is often self- rather than other-directed. Adherents of the Solar Temple and Heaven's Gate killed themselves, not others.

In the introduction I made the point that sociology is poor at explaining rare events. I have just accepted that the major religions do not at first sight differ hugely in their attitudes to violence *per se*: all think it a bad thing which can be justified only in extremis. What I want to do now is to suggest that we can nonetheless make some observations about the differential potential of religions to legitimate political violence by raising questions about the general orientation of religious themes to the background for forms of political action that are more or less likely to promote violence in certain circumstances. This rather cumbersome form of words suggests a much humbler project than Huntington's identification of civilizational clashes but, unlike Said's refusal to explain anything unpleasant by religion, it is an attempt to use religion to explain political action. I do not have the space to do other than stipulate an important part of my reasoning: that attitudes to unbelievers, to the state, and to behavioural conformity form an important part of the cultural background from which political actors, in considering the possibilities of political violence, construct vocabularies of motives.

Monotheism and Social Divisions

A major part of that cultural background is the nature and extent of social division. The depth of division is a correlate of the strength of cohesion within groups. Communal violence is a characteristic of settings in which "community" carries enormous weight; in which groups are seen as more important than individuals. Religions differ systematically in the extent to which they support group identities. To have a divinely-elected people with a divine mandate (to be beastly to those not so chosen) one needs a God who chose his people and delivered the mandate (Smith 1999). Hence deep divisions between "them" and "us" are more likely to acquire religious legitimation in monotheistic religious cultures than polytheistic ones. Polytheists can become

religio-ethnic nationalists but in order to do so convincingly they have to reshape their religion in a monotheistic and exclusivist direction. We see this clearly in the Hindutva movement, which gives pride of place to the cult of Ram as the God who created the Hindu people.

The strong God-people link can be greatly weakened by differences in the procedural rules for discerning the will of God. Although Protestants are as much monotheists as Catholics and the Orthodox, their rejection of a hierarchical model of access to the will of God and their insistence on the equality of all believers leads inevitably to factionalism and repeated schism. Once the people of God are divided into a large number of competing organizations it becomes very difficult to suppose that "our people" are divinely blessed and superior to "them." No matter how certain they are of their own rectitude Protestants are regularly led, more or less reluctantly, to accepting the idea of religious liberty and toleration. And Protestant states tend to become religiously neutral. Much more could be said about this (see Bruce 1996) but the general point is simple: individualism in core religious ideas encourages individualism more generally and thus weakens the ability of groups to claim divine approval.

This in turn has consequences for violence in that it makes it harder to dehumanise one's opponents. Of course, there are examples of Protestant religio-ethnic nationalism (Ulster is one, South Africa another) but these tend to be fragile and short-lived. The Dutch Reformed Church clergy had little difficulty abandoning their support for apartheid. And for all Paisley's talk of the "Ulster Protestant people" he is all too aware of the unregenerate nature of the majority of those people. Outsiders who see only Paisley's anti-Catholicism miss the point that the vast majority of his protests have been directed at the Church of Ireland and the Irish Presbyterian Church. He has also frequently denounced "those who are Protestant in name only." In politics he appeals to the Protestant electorate but he does not believe that they are God's chosen people.

Separation of Church and State

Ulster evangelicals distinguish between the church and the state. As noted, the fissiparous nature of Protestantism gives them little choice. But that practical necessity was readily accepted in Christian cultures because it is legitimated by core religious ideas. One reading of Christ's injunction to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's is made plausible by the long history of political impotence of Christianity. Unlike Islam which began in power, Christianity spent 300 years on the margins before it became the official cult of the Roman Empire. Subsequently it enjoyed considerable magisterium but even when the Papacy was at its most powerful, church and state, spiritual and political power, were clearly differentiated in a way that was not the case for the Caliphate.

Toleration and Conformity

Alongside the rather formal issue of the extent to which church and state are separated there is a related issue of the ease with which believers can tolerate heresy and apostasy. Here sociology has an important contribution to make because, unlike the jurist, the theologian, the philosopher or the historian of ideas, the sociologist is concerned less with official pronouncements and more with "practical attitudes." One way to see the point clearly is to recognise the ease with which, in comparison to most Muslim societies, Protestant cultures tolerate the rejection of their faith. In many settings where Muslims dominate, Islam is given a protected status and apostasy is punished. The constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, for example, makes apostasy a crime punishable by death. The more communal Catholic and Orthodox varieties of Christianity tend to imposition. In contrast, Protestants find it easy to allow people to go to hell if they wish. Partly this reflects minority status: most conservative Protestant groups spent their formative years as minorities that lacked the power to impose their culture on others. But it is also a consequence of the hyper individualism which seeks to separate out

the converted Saints from the unregenerate mass. This breeds an acceptance that what is necessary for salvation need not be (because it cannot be) imposed on everyone. US surveys show that even self-avowed fundamentalists recognise that much of what they regard as divinely-mandated should not be made a matter of law.

The Protestant ability to live with heresy and apostasy seems to owe much to an aspect of religion that looms large for sociologists because of its social consequences: rules for conduct. One of the most salient differences between salvation religions (and it is one that proponents themselves stress) concerns what is required for salvation. Although it simplifies by leaving aside the mystical, we can distinguish between a stress on correct beliefs and on correct actions. Strictly speaking the contrast should be between faiths that require correct beliefs and those that require correct beliefs and correct actions. The Pure Land School of Buddhism's assertion that saying *Namu Amida Butsu* (the Japanese form for "Homage to the Buddha of boundless compassion and wisdom") before death will ensure transport to heaven and the attitude of some Catholics to the efficacy of the Last Rites both come close to suggesting that action alone may be enough, but generally orthoprax religions suppose that right actions only become properly right when performed with the appropriate underpinning of faith. That said, there is a clear distinction between religions in the extent to which they mandate behaviour.

The type of religious experience most favoured in Christianity is the personal acceptance of redemptive grace which is to transform the inward springs of life . . . The type of religious experience favored in Islam is, then, the active personal acceptance of prophetic truth, which is to discipline and orient one's total life. (Hodgson 1960:54, 59)

For Protestants what matters is that one has the right beliefs or doctrines: hence orthodoxy. One can be a private Protestant in a Jewish world and still be saved. The corollary of that point is that living in a country that abides by the sabbath and gives prominence to Protestant religious culture will not save you. Although Protestants have sometimes tried to order the world around them to maximise the chances of

people being saved (and have badgered the unGodly) strictly speaking they have no need to do this, which explains why they readily give up doing so. One strand of US Protestant fundamentalism (exemplified by the graduates of Bob Jones University, Greenville, South Carolina) goes so far as to argue that the New Christian Right's wish to reform the public arena may damage the chances of saving souls by implying that public virtue (that is "good works") will earn salvation. Even the Catholic strand of Christianity, though it prescribes certain ritual acts as efficacious, need have little interest in the wider public world because the ritual acts are small and can be slotted into almost any sort of economy or society. Hence its concordats with states are more concerned with the conditions for its reproduction (Catholic schooling, for example) rather than with the imposition of Catholic social mores.

In contrast Islam is orthoprax: a major part of gaining salvation is to live a certain life and those behavioural requirements are far-reaching: "none of the revealed religions place as much emphasis on right conduct (as opposed to right belief) as Islam" (Robinson 2001:38). There is an Islamic law in the way that there is not a Catholic or a Protestant law. As Ba-Yunus puts it:

In Islam personal worship and obedience to the rules of other institutions [in the sociological sense] are the two sides of the same coin. One cannot exist without the other. This broadening of worship seems to be unique to Islam. Above all, it means that for a Muslim to be pious, altruistic and peaceful within and without, not only is a personal and ritualist devotion to God a requirement, but also an Islamic institutional environment in which to live as a Muslim (2002:107).

I am not sure about the uniqueness of this broadening of worship. The long ability of diasporic Jews to sustain their faith suggests that their need to shape their environment is both less pressing and less-far-reaching but nonetheless mainstream Jews have traditionally formed distinctive communities and the current arguments about the role of religion in the state of Israel suggests a powerful press to public domination (Eisenstadt 1985:515–16).

To pre-empt the charge of essentialism, we may note important differences within Islam as to the preferred mechanism for imposing Godliness. Khomeini's particular emphasis on the role of the charis-

matic Imam is not the same as Mawdudi's vision of the community imposing Islam on itself. Nonetheless the desired goal is the same: a righteous environment. And that is recognised as central to Islam even by Muslims who are fiercely critical of fundamentalists such as Mawdudi. Fazlur Rahman, for example, says that Muslim scripture is an expression of "deep God consciousness [that] is creatively and organically-related to the founding of an ethical sociopolitical order in the world" (Waines 1995:243). "Creatively" suggests distance from Wahhabi puritanism but this still leaves us some way from the views of most Christian churches.

Of course, all believers share one common interest in persuading or forcing others to share their views: sheer weight of numbers and public presence reinforces our conviction that we are right. But the orthodoxy/ orthopraxy axis remains important because it explains why some religions find it easier to tolerate diversity than others. It is not the psychology of Muslims, Christians and Jews that explains why there is an Islamic Republic of Pakistan and an Islamic Republic of Iran and why many Israelis wish Israel to be a Jewish state but there is not a Christian Republic of Sweden; there are basic differences between religions in the extent to which they mandate a particular way of life.

Pietistic Retreat

A crucial part of the explanation of the attitudes to violence of Ulster evangelicals is their potential for victory in defeat. There has always been a tension within Protestantism between the activist saints who wish to impose Godly discipline on the world and the pietists who regard the preservation of Godly piety as more important than reform. Clearly which tendency is uppermost is partly a product of circumstance; all but the most fanatical believers will more often than not trim to the prevailing wind. For all their insistence on the impending apocalypse and their threats of insurrection, the Fifth Monarchy Men failed to mount any serious challenge to the restoration of the Stewarts in May 1660 (Rogers 1966:100–4). But beyond the force of circumstance we can derive from core religious ideas the proposition

that Protestantism is unusually well suited to the catacombs. Walzer says of the Calvinist Puritans:

The saints attempted to fasten upon the necks of all mankind the yoke of a new political discipline . . . This discipline was not to depend upon the authority of paternal kings and lords or upon the obedience of childlike and trustful subjects. Puritans sought to make it voluntary, like the contract itself, the object of individual and collective wilfulness. But voluntary or not, its keynote was repression (1965:302).

For my purposes the same observation can be read in reverse order. The repression that the Saints desired was voluntary and they routinely scaled down the intended reach from “all mankind” to the select few who would join them. It is easy then to read the apostasy of the masses not as a spur to further efforts to reform them but as a justification for allowing them to take themselves to hell.

Conclusion

This discussion can only be suggestive. There is not the space to discuss even the case of Ulster evangelicals in sufficient detail to prove the value of my approach. However, the above should be enough to indicate one social scientific approach to a study of the possible links between religion and violence. I have sought to steer my way between two unhelpful positions: the structural social science that denies religion causal status and the popular commentary that gives too much weight to very specific religious ideas. The conclusions I wish to make from my study of Paisleyism in Northern Ireland (and the same case could be made from a study of the law-abiding nature of the US New Christian Right) can be stripped down to this core. Modern (and that can probably be further specified as post-Westphalian) Protestant fundamentalists have not engaged in holy war. A large part of that acceptance of the status quo can be explained by their location in reasonably stable affluent societies with popularly-accepted powerful states that offer considerable rewards for confining value disagreements to court battles, pressure group activities and elections. Here Northern Ireland is interesting because the state was, for a time, extremely fragile. But I do not believe that all of the peaceable char-

acter of Protestant fundamentalism is explained by mundane circumstance. We can identify religious roots of those mundane circumstances by working backwards to show the considerable contribution that reformed Protestantism made to the rise of liberal democracy (Bruce 2004:244–54) but we can also appreciate that even today there is a cultural connection. And it is not to be found in the presence within Protestantism of specifically pacifist movements (though there is an interesting question to be asked about why the Protestant strand of Christianity should have produced more of those than Catholicism or Islam). Rather I have suggested that the key to understanding the constraints on Protestant fundamentalist political action lies in the deeper background: a grudging toleration of heresy and apostasy, an inability to long sustain a strong sense of shared identity vis-à-vis the ungodly, an acceptance of secular rules of conduct, an acceptance of the state's monopoly of coercion, and the attractive option of pietistic retreat from the world have all combined to rule out *jihad* as an option.

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“CONSIDER THAT IT IS A RAID ON THE PATH OF GOD”: THE SPIRITUAL MANUAL OF THE ATTACKERS OF 9/11

HANS G. KIPPENBERG

Summary

The document found with three of the four cells responsible for the crimes of 9/11 is unique in providing specific information about how the Muslim suicide terrorists conceived of their action. The document shows that they found justification for violence by emulating the moment in early Islamic history when Muhammad cancelled contracts with non-Muslims and organized raids (*ghazwa*) against the Meccans in order to establish Islam as a political order. No statement in the Manual explicitly identifies the United States as the financial, military, and political center of today's paganism; rather, such identification is tacitly assumed, as was shown by the action itself. Instead, the Manual prescribes recitations, prayers and rituals by which each member of the four cells should prepare for the *ghazwa*, purify his intention and anticipate in his mind the successive stages of the struggle to come. Not the objective aim but the subjective intention is at the center of the Manual. The article places this type of justification of violence in the history of Islamic activism since the 1980s.

On September 28, 2001, the FBI distributed at a Press conference four pages of an Arabic document, and also published it on its website, where it can still be found today.¹ The headline is spectacular: “Hijacking letter Found at three Locations.” Beneath the four pages of Arabic text the website displays three photos, surrounded by information about the hijackers, their flights and the places where the documents were found. Muhammad Atta is connected with the American Airlines flight 11 that crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center at 8:45; underneath his photo the FBI informs: “Found in Atta's suitcase.” The next photo shows Nawaf al-Hazmi; the text connects him with American Airlines #77, which crashed 9:39 into the Pentagon,

¹ <http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/pressrel01/letter.htm>.

and the document is described as, "Found in Vehicle at Dulles International Airport." Finally, a photo of the crash site of United Airlines #93 at Stony Creek Township is accompanied by the remark, "Found at Crime Scene."

Despite the excitement one would expect the discovery to stir, the document was, and still is, widely ignored. Only recently a scholarly edition, with translation and an analysis of the Arabic text has been published in Germany.² Careful scholarly investigation has been rare, compared to the importance of the events. Government and scholars alike ignore the document. In this essay I would like to argue that the document is relevant for an understanding what happened and also for evaluating the military answer of the United States to the attacks.

I shall address four major issues: first, the issue of the authenticity of the document; second, the document as a Spiritual Manual turning ordinary young Muslims into warriors and martyrs; third, the social form in which the men operated; and fourth, the "War on Terrorism" in the light of the document.

The Authenticity of the Document

Muhammad Atta, who navigated the first plane into the North Tower of the World Trade Center, came from Boston, where he changed planes. One piece of his luggage did not make it into his plane from Logan airport, whether by chance or not we do not know. When his suitcase was found, two documents were discovered. In a last will, written in English and laid down in 1996, Atta prescribed how his body should be handled after his death in order to prevent pollution. Much more spectacular is the handwritten Arabic text published by the FBI. It anticipates the stages of the attack and prescribes for each stage recitations of the Koran, prayers and rituals. The British journal *The Observer*, published, on September 30, an English transla-

² Hans G. Kippenberg and Tilman Seidensticker (eds.), *Terror im Dienste Gottes: Die "Geistliche Anleitung" der Attentäter des 11. September 2001*, Frankfurt: Campus 2004.

tion of the four pages.³ Another, better, translation was later made by Hassan Mneimneh for *The New York Review of Books*.⁴

Still on September 28, *The Washington Post* published a leading article on the discovery, “In Hijacker’s Bags, a Call to Planning, Prayer and Death.” The article spoke about five pages instead of four, and later in the same issue (page A18) published two extracts in English:

In the name of God, the most merciful, the most compassionate . . . In the name of God, of myself and of my family . . . I pray to you God to forgive me from all my sins, to allow me to glorify you in every possible way.

Remember the battle of the prophet . . . against the infidels, as he went on building the Islamic state.

Since neither extract is found in the four pages previously published, they must have been derived from the fifth page. The second quotation perfectly fits the Manual, since it conceives of the attacks in terms of the prophet Muhammad’s *ghazwa* at the time when the Islamic polity was established in Medina. But the first of the sentences elicited serious doubts about its authenticity. What pious Muslim would dare to say: “In the name of God, of myself and of my family”? Since the Arabic original of this text has never been published, and the FBI distributed the English extracts during the Press conference, a mistranslation cannot be ruled out.

As was said already, the text found in Muhammad Atta’s bag was not the only one. A second copy was found in the car used by Nawaf al-Hazmi and left at Dulles International Airport. CBS News claimed to have gotten hold of that copy, and published, on October 1, 2001, an English translation of it.⁵ It likewise consists of four pages, and the translation agrees widely with that of Muhammad Atta’s text. All scans available on the Internet reproduce one and the same original.

³ www.observer.co.uk/international/story/0,6903,560773,00.html.

⁴ Hassan Mneimneh, “Appendix,” in Robert B. Silvers and Barbara Epstein (eds.), *Striking Terror: America’s New War*, New York: New York Review of Books 2002, 319–27.

⁵ “Translated Text: Hijackers’ How-To” (cbsnews October 1, 2001). It can be found under www.cbsnews.com when entering the title of the article in the “search” box.

Perhaps the CBS journalist misunderstood the law enforcement agents when they distributed copies during the Press Conference. The remnants of the third copy have not been published either.

The document and all information about it derive from US Secret Service sources — a fact that has given rise to speculations about a forgery. It is worthwhile to note, therefore, that independent evidence exists about the Manual of the hijackers. It derives from the reporter for al-Jazeera, Yosri Fouda, who under conspiratorial circumstances met Ramzi Binalshibh in Karachi. Binalshibh acted as the intermediary between the Hamburg group and the chief of the military committee of al-Qa'ida, Khalid Sheikh Muhammad. Fouda did an extensive interview with him and was told how the attacks were prepared.⁶ Binalshibh showed him a suitcase with “souvenirs” from his stay in Hamburg, among them a booklet containing handwritten notes in the margin by Muhammad Atta. Since the handwriting differed from that of the document published by the FBI,⁷ Binalshibh explained to Fouda that the manuscript in Atta's luggage had been written by Abdul Aziz al-Omari, who was highly respected in the group for his profound knowledge of Islam and his beautiful handwriting.⁸

Though the find was spectacular, the document had no major impact on the examination of the events and was widely ignored. What are the reasons for that? Immediately after its release, the well-known Middle East scholar Robert Fisk drew attention to statements in the document he found suspicious in the mouth of a Muslim. “What Muslim would write: ‘The time of fun and waste is gone’?” he asked in *The Independent* September 29, 2001. As additional evidence he cited the expressions “100 per cent” and “optimistic,” too modern for Arabic theological language. Fisk, who at that time had seen only the English translation, drew a cautious conclusion about possible Christian trans-

⁶ Yosri Fouda and Nick Fielding, *Masterminds of Terror: The Truth behind the most Devastating Terrorist Attack the World has ever Seen*, Edinburgh: Main Stream 2003.

⁷ Fouda called the document a “Manual for a Raid.”

⁸ See Fouda and Fielding, *Masterminds of Terror*, 115, 158.

lators: "The translation, as it stands, suggests an almost Christian view of what the hijackers might have felt."⁹

Fisk's remarks gained weight in conjunction with conspiracy theories that started circulating soon after the events. Michael Barkun who had studied the American culture of conspiracy for many years, found it easy to link certain explanations of the events and of the reaction of the US government to long established types of conspiracy. He pointed to certain American groups that did not attribute the attacks to Usama bin Ladin and his organization, but to the interest of the US government of restricting the freedom of the citizens under the pretext of counterterrorism.¹⁰ Other conspiracy theories originated outside the United States. Rumors swept across the Muslim world that the attacks had been perpetrated by the Secret Service of Israel and that four thousand Jews who normally worked in the WTC did not show up for work on September 11 because they had been tipped off by Mossad.¹¹ All these political conspiracy theories assume that the text is a forgery, fabricated either by the FBI or by Mossad.

Forgery is a common phenomenon in the history of religions. Well-known documents are ascribed to authorities that cannot have written them. The fifth book of Moses and the book of Daniel were not composed in the time they pretend, but much later. In these and other instances the suspicion of forgery has been substantiated by scholarly inquiry. Only after careful investigation and discussion could the suspicion become a plausible thesis. In the case of our document it is the other way around. No serious attempts have been made to prove the

⁹ Robert Fisk, "What Muslim would write: 'The time of fun and waste is gone'?" *The Independent* September 29, 2001.

¹⁰ Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, Berkeley: University of California 2003, ch. 10, "September 11: The Aftermath," 158–69; other political conspiracy narratives are told by Malise Ruthven, *A Fury for God: The Islamist Attack on America*, London: Granada 2002, 294–98.

¹¹ John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, Oxford: UP 2002, 74. The Anti-Defamation League rejected these rumours: "Unraveling Anti-Semitic 9/11 Conspiracy Theories," available on its website (<http://www.adl.org>).

suspicion. Crucial issues are not clarified. Who would be responsible for the forgery? What could be the purpose of it? Who used the document, and for what aim? Since no answers are given to these questions, the notion of a forgery is without any scholarly value. But the popularity of the suspicion has certainly contributed to the disappearance of the document from the scholarly and public debates about 9/11.

Despite all the doubts and uncertainties, qualified attempts have been made to take the document seriously. Hassan Mneimneh and Kanan Makiya published in January 2002, in *The New York Review of Books*, an examination of the “Manual for a ‘Raid,’” followed by the translation mentioned above.¹² The authors explained the contents of the document in terms of Islamic literature, theology and history. In December 2002, the Martin-Marty-Center of the University of Chicago, a research institution for the study of religions, started on its website a debate about the document. Bruce Lincoln, following up on Mneimneh and Makiya, tried to specify the worldview of the perpetrators by pointing to the Egyptian intellectual Sayyid Qutb, a spokesman of the militant wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in the sixties.¹³ Sayyid Qutb denounced the Westernization of Egypt’s culture and society as a new paganism, a new era of ignorance (*jahiliyya*). He called upon the faithful Muslim to do the same as the prophet had once done: to fight to overthrow the power of paganism together with a few dedicated men. Sayyid Qutb paid for his subversive version of Islam with his life and was executed by the Egyptian government in 1966.¹⁴ Bruce Lawrence and Mark Juergensmeyer also joined the

¹² See note 4. Hassan Mneimneh and Kanan Makiya, “Manual for a ‘Raid,’” *New York Review of Books* January 17, 2002 (<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/15106>); repr. in Robert B. Silvers and Barbara Epstein (eds.), *Striking Terror: America’s New War*, New York: New York Review of Books 2002, 301–18.

¹³ See also Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terror: Thinking about Religion after September 11*, Chicago: UP 2003, ch. 1.

¹⁴ Yvonne Y. Haddad, “Sayyid Qutb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival,” in John L. Esposito (ed.), *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, New York and Oxford: UP 1983, 67–98; Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*, New Haven and London: Yale UP 1990, 2nd ed., 21–28. The concept of a modern *jahiliyya* derives from the Pakistan theorist Abu ’l-A’la Mawdudi.

debate on the Chicago website and by and large supported Lincoln's approach.¹⁵ Good reasons exist, therefore, to be less concerned with the possibility of a forgery than with missing a unique opportunity to reconstruct the meaning the attackers attributed to their crime.

A Spiritual Manual Turning Young Muslims into Warriors and Martyrs

The author of the manual was certainly not a well-educated Islamic cleric. This is clear from the sixth instruction:

You should know that the best invocation is the recitation of the Holy Koran, by the consensus of scholars, *as far as I know* (italics HGK). It suffices for us that it is the word of the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, toward whom you are heading. (I, 6)

The words "as far as I know" suggest a layman as author. In Islam clerics are legal experts, while sermons are often delivered by laypersons. Muhammad Atta may have been the author of the Manual. There is an additional reason for that assumption: the internal hierarchy in and between the four groups. He probably was the head of the four groups, as will turn out later. But according to Fouda, al-Omari was the writer.

If the document was a manual placed in the hands of three out of four groups, it enables us to reconstruct the subjective meaning of the violent action. The concept of 'subjective meaning' derives from Max Weber, who distinguished it strictly from that of individual motives.¹⁶ The motivation of a man to commit a crime at the expense of his life is something different from the meaning he attributes to his deed. Motives must be analyzed in terms of biography (personal emotions, experiences and reflections), subjective meanings in terms of cultural and religious categories. Subjective meanings are not invented *ad hoc*, but are derived from a stock of worldviews and

¹⁵ <http://marty-center.uchicago.edu/webforum/122002/commentary.shtml>.

¹⁶ Cf. Hans G. Kippenberg, "Religious Communities Providing Meaning in Social Interactions: The Section 'Sociology of Religion' in Max Weber's *Economy and Society*," in Charles Camic, Phil Gorski, and David Trubek (eds.), *Economy and Society: Max Weber in 2000*, Stanford: UP, forthcoming.

ethical principles that are available in culture and religion. In this section I would like to examine the subjective meaning in this Weberian sense.

The manual conceived of the deed as *jihad/ghazwa*.¹⁷ In Islam to wage a war for the sake of God has a long history. Since early times it was considered a duty for every male believer. When state officials announced a war against infidels and mobilized their armies, the individual Muslim believer was expected to serve in the armed forces. But there existed a stronger version of this duty. A Muslim could prove the sincerity of his faith by participating in a war against the infidels, provided he did so voluntarily. The saying of the Prophet that the monasticism of his community consists in the *jihad* is more than an anti-Christian polemic. It establishes in Islam a positive connection between asceticism and the war against infidels.¹⁸ In the classical Islamic texts the sincere Islamic fighter prepared for war by world denial, exclaiming eulogies of God, reciting from the Koran, performing prayers, saying *dhikr*, and fasting.¹⁹ Albrecht Noth, who painstakingly has studied the relation between ascetic practices and war against the infidels in the classical Arabic literature, drew the conclusion that, "in Islam the struggle against the infidels was regarded and proclaimed as a kind of worship."²⁰

A Mutual Pledge to Die and a Renewal of Intent

The Spiritual Manual divided the *ghazwa* into three stages: the Night before, on the airport, in the plane. Not the violent act in itself,

¹⁷ The jihadists conceived of their attack as a *ghazwa*, a raid. Members of al-Qa'ida called it "the Manhattan *ghazwa*," "the two *ghazwas* from Washington and New York," or "the Operation Holy Tuesday" (Fouda and Fielding, *Masterminds of Terror*, 108, 121 n. 11).

¹⁸ Albrecht Noth, *Heiliger Krieg und Heiliger Kampf im Islam und Christentum: Beiträge zur Vorgeschichte und Geschichte der Kreuzzüge*, Bonn: Röhrscheid 1966, 52–53.

¹⁹ Ibid. 55–56.

²⁰ "... im Islam [wurde] der Kampf gegen die Ungläubigen als eine Möglichkeit des 'Gottesdienstes' angesehen und proklamiert" (ibid. 61).

but the way in which it should be enacted stands at the centre of the Manual. It opens with the words: “Mutual pledge (*bai‘a*) to die and renewal of intent.” *Bai‘a* signified in the history of Islamic community formation a solemn act by which faithful Muslims declared their allegiance towards each other and towards their leader.²¹ Sufi associations of young men, the *futuwwa*, were based on the same practice.²² In modern times, the Egyptian Muslim Brothers adopted the principle and admitted new members by an “oath of brotherhood” (*bai‘at al-ukhuwwa*).²³ This practice spread among militant groups at the fringe of the Brothers. The author of the infamous writing *The Neglected Duty*, that formulated the creed of the assassins of President Sadat (1981), Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj (1954–1982) raised the question whether an “oath of allegiance to fight until death” was restricted to the Prophet alone or could also be given to other commanders than the Prophet. Faraj argued that it could (§§ 95–97).²⁴ The opening of Manual implies that the participants in the 9/11 operation had joined the al-Qa‘ida network by a solemn oath of loyalty given to Usama bin Ladin and his community.²⁵

Probably all combatants knew the Manual and prepared for their action by reading it or listening to it. Since the Manual indicated “airport” and “plane” by abbreviations, one may wonder whether all the

²¹ Roy P. Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*, Princeton: UP 1980, 50–54.

²² Franz Taeschner, *Zünfte und Bruderschaften im Islam: Texte zur Geschichte der Futuwwa*, Zürich: Artemis 1979, 97 and 159.

²³ Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, Oxford: UP 1969, 196; “The Muslim Brotherhood tradition in Egypt had not, unlike the Salafis, entirely rejected Sufi ideas” (J. Cole: “Al-Qaeda’s Doomsday Document and Psychological Manipulation,” <http://www.juancole.com/essays/qaeda>).

²⁴ Johannes J. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat’s Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East*, New York: Macmillan 1986, 24, 204; Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, 196.

²⁵ For a reconstruction of the three stages of joining al-Qa‘ida, see Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2004, 99–135; on pp. 120–21 he deals with “Formal Acceptance.”

young men actually knew in advance all the technical details of the operation. The abbreviations were certainly also done for reasons of security, in case the documents came in wrong hands. According to an interview given by Usama bin Ladin, the “muscle hijackers” from Saudi-Arabia, who had joined the pilots in order to control flight-deck and cabin, did not know all the details, though the Manual left them in no doubt that they were embarking on a suicidal mission.²⁶ Only the four pilots, three of them from the Hamburg group, knew all the details.

The faithful fighters are making a “renewal of intent.” In Islamic law, “intent” (*niyya*) is a fundamental category. “An act of worship without *niyya* is invalid, and so is *niyya* without act.”²⁷ But what does that mean in the case of a *ghazwa*? Later the Manual refers to Ali, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, as a model for how to prepare for a fight:

In one of the early battles in 627 Ali ibn Abi Talib had a duel with a disbeliever, who suddenly spit upon him. After that insult Ali put down his sword. Only later he killed him. After the battle the companions asked him why he had waited before striking him. Ali answered: “When he spit on me, I feared that if I were to strike him, it would be out of vengeance. So I held my sword.” (III, 16–17)

The manual proceeds: “When he became sure of his intention, he struck and killed him,” and draws the lesson: “One has to be sure, that the action is for the sake of God alone” (III, 18). A desire for personal vengeance threatens the correct intention. Only when the intention is purified from all personal emotions, can a violent reac-

²⁶ Usama Bin Ladin stated in a TV interview: “The brothers who conducted the operation, all they knew was that they have a martyrdom operation and we asked each of them to go to America but they didn’t know anything about the operation, not even one letter. But they were trained and we did not reveal the operation to them until they are there and just before they boarded the planes” (quoted by Mneimneh and Makiya in Silvers and Epstein, *Striking Terror*, 303–4 n. 2).

²⁷ Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1964, 116.

tion to an injury be turned into a sacred deed. This is the reason that the attack of 9/11 was preceded by and embedded in a rich sequence of rituals, recitations and prayers.

We encounter a similar understanding of violence in *The Neglected Duty*. According to Faraj, *jihad* has three aspects: struggling against ones own soul, against the Devil, and against the infidels and hypocrites. These three dimensions cannot be separated as independent successive stages, as some believe. They all are part and parcel of one and the same action (§ 88).²⁸ It is tempting to suggest that Faraj's three dimensions concur with the tripartite division of the action in the *Spiritual Manual* that divides the *ghazwa* in three parts: the struggle with ones own soul takes place during the night before, the mental struggle with the satanic forces at the airport, and the external fight against the infidels inside the aircraft.

The Last Night: Nocturnal Recitations, Prayers and Purifications, Turning a Young Muslim into a Warrior

The *Manual* admonished the young Muslims to prepare the night before their bodies and their souls for the *ghazwa*. 15 exercises are prescribed, from a recapitulation of the plan to recitals, prayers, meditations and purifications. The Arabic word for recital, *dhikr*, carries the broad meaning of remembering. The choice of Suras 8 and 9 to be remembered is highly significant. Both originated at the time when Muhammad had left Mecca, had begun establishing an Islamic state in Medina, and had gone to war against the Meccans. Muhammad the persecuted prophet turned into Muhammad the statesman.²⁹ Muhammad cancelled all former contracts with non-Muslims (Koran 9:1) and called upon his followers to attack them and kill them wherever they could find them (the so-called Sword Verse, Koran 9:5).

²⁸ Since *jihad* is an individual duty similar to prayer and fasting, a young man need not ask his parents for permission (§ 87) (cf. Jansen, *The Neglected Duty*, 22, 200).

²⁹ W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, Oxford: UP 1961, 102–26.

The Prophet himself had ordered the Sura to be recited before the raid (*ghazwa*). Rich booty was to be the reward.³⁰

In Medina the relationship between Muhammad and the infidels changed fundamentally. While during the years in Mecca kindness and tact in propagating the message was practiced, now warfare for the sake of an Islamic polity was demanded. This shift from tolerance to militancy is a major issue in Islamic theology. At the heart of the issue is the Sword Verse, 9:5:

And when the sacred months are over, kill the polytheists wherever you find them, and take them captive, and besiege them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem [of war]; but if they repent, establish regular prayers, and pay *zakat* then open the way for them, for God is the dispenser of mercy.

A majority of Islamic clerics assume that the Sword Verse has replaced the older, more tolerant revelations, on the basis of the principle of Koran 2:106: "Any sign (or verse) which We annul or consign to oblivion We replace with a better or a similar one." But not all Islamic clerics understand the verse that way.³¹ Abdullah Ahmed An-Na'im, e.g., openly rejects the idea of a literal abrogation (*naskh*) of earlier Suras.³²

³⁰ The second excerpt of the fifth page of the document referred to that idea. The attackers should remember the battle of the prophet against the infidels when he set out to build the Islamic state.

³¹ M. Ruthven deals with this crucial issue (*A Fury for God*, 42, 47–52) and points to the possibility of a misunderstanding of the sentence: not earlier revelations to Muhammad are superseded, but the former revelations to Jews and Christians. Wael B. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunni 'usul al-fiqh*, Cambridge: UP 1997, deals with the different opinions of jurists regarding abrogation (68–74).

³² An-Na'im relies on the authority of the Sudanese scholar Mahmud Muhammad Taha, who discerned two stages of the message of Islam, one belonging to the early Mecca period, the other to the subsequent Medina stage. Taha maintained that the earlier message was in fact the eternal and fundamental one; it emphasized the inherent dignity of all human beings, regardless of gender, religious belief, race, and so forth. When that message was violently rejected by the people of Mecca, the more realistic message of Medina was implemented. But the suspended aspects of the

After the recital of the Suras, Sufi practices of self-conditioning are recommended. Juan Cole has examined the psychology of the document and noted remarkable agreements with spiritual techniques among Sufis and Muslim Brothers.³³

Reminding the self to listen and obey that night. You will face decisive situations which require listening and obeying 100%. You should therefore tame your self, make it understand, convince it, and incite it to action. (I, 4)

“The carnal self is the enemy of the vow to die, selfishly seeking to hang on to life,” J. Cole explains. The young man shall pray in the middle of the night for facilitating matters and for covering (I, 5), recite the Koran (I, 6) and purify his heart. Here we encounter the sentences Robert Fisk regarded as spurious: “The time for amusement is gone”; “We have wasted so much time in our life” (I, 7). But in this context these statements are anything but unexpected. The instruction employs a religious language of world denial, something which is also known in Islam. Then follow the instructions: the Muslim warrior should be optimistic; marriage is ahead (I, 8). If he faces difficulties, they are God’s trial in order to raise his status (I, 9). He can put all his trust in God. With the permission of God, even a tiny group can defeat a big one (I, 10). After more prayers (I, 11) some practical advises are given, including the gruesome sharpening of the sacrificial knife and the proper clothing (I, 12–14). Morning prayers and a ritual ablution mark the end of the first stage (I, 15).

Mecca message were not abrogated in principle. They were only postponed for implementation under appropriate circumstances in the future. Under the present circumstances the development of Islamic law should return from the Medina stage back to the Mecca stage. By historicizing Muhammad’s revelations Taha and An-Na’im envision an Islamic order that incorporates women and non-Muslims on equal terms. The approach is similar to what happened in modern Jewish and Christian theology (Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im, *Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights, and International Law*, Syracuse, NY: UP 1990, 52–60).

³³ In his article cited above (n. 23) Cole translates the word *tanbih* by “admonition,” in the sense of an admonition of the “base self” (*al-nafs*).

This spiritual preparation is part of the imminent attack. The recitals, prayers, and purifications made by the attackers transform them into warriors and martyrs of an ideal past. Their deeds are re-enactments of events that took place in the formative period when Muhammad established Islam as an autonomous political body in Medina in the years after the *hijra*. But the spiritual exercises also serve as a ritual of status elevation. In almost all societies rituals may invalidate binding moral norms based on temporary, local, and social criteria. In times of war, rituals are needed to entitle men to kill, otherwise their actions would not be clearly distinguished from crimes.³⁴ The first part of the Spiritual Manual contains such a ritual of status elevation. The young man is removed from everyday legal norms and is turned into a warrior-hero beyond the law; the people in the plane and the buildings are transformed into infidels deserving God's punishment.

At the Airport: A Hidden Soldier Sent by the Ultimate Power

The second "stage" anticipates the situation at the airport. The main theme of the unit is the protection the warrior enjoys in a world ruled by satanic powers:

Wherever you go and whatever you do, you have to persist in invocation and supplication. For God is with his believing servants, protecting them, facilitating their tasks, granting them success, enabling them, providing them with victory, and everything. (II, 17)

The warrior can remain calm; the angels will protect him even if he does not notice it. Crucial for how to deal with the situation in the airport is the instruction to recite the supplication, "God is stronger than all his creation," and to pray to God that the enemies will be

³⁴ Bruce Lincoln, "War and Warriors," in *Enc. Religion*, 15:339–44; Hans-Peter Hasenfratz, "Krieg und Frieden in archaischen Gemeinschaften," in Fritz Stolz (ed.), *Religion zu Krieg und Frieden*, Zürich: Theologischer Verlag 1986, 13–29, at 20; Jörg Rüpke, "You Shall not Kill: Hierarchies of Norms in Ancient Rome," *Numen* 39 (1992) 58–79; Heinrich von Stietencron and Jörg Rüpke (ed.), *Töten im Krieg*, Freiburg and Munich: Alber 1995, indices s.v. Rite, Ritual, Ritualisierung.

unable to recognize him so that he remains undetected (II, 3). "All their equipment, and all their gates and all their technology do not do benefit or harm, except with the permission of God" (II, 7). Only the friends of Satan are afraid of that technology. "Fear is a great act of worship, that only can be offered to God" (II, 8; cf. II, 10). While the friends of Satan are impressed by "the civilization of the West," the true believer fears God alone (II, 9). Unnoticed by others, the believer is repeating, "There is no God except Allah" (*lā ilāha illā 'llāh*) (II, 11). The Prophet himself has indicated the tremendous power of these words: "Whoever says: 'There is no God except Allah,' enters paradise." "If the seven earths and skies are placed on one scale and 'There is no God except Allah' on the other scale, then the scale of 'There is no God except Allah' weights the other down" (II, 12).

The manual specifies the enemy only here, nowhere else: It is "Western Civilization" and the fear it inspires in people. The correct fear constitutes the difference between the true believer and the ignorant infidel. "Fear is a great act of worship." By inciting fear in the friends of the Western civilization, the warrior gives a practical proof of the existence of a power much greater than Western civilization. The traditional notion of God's absolute power no longer has a metaphysical mooring only, but has been turned into a practice of the believers.

Closely connected with this construction of the superiority of the Muslim warrior is his concealment. The soldier of the ultimate power remains unrecognized in the realm of evil powers. Protection is achieved by the practice of dissimulation. In a world of lies the true believer has to deceive the unbelievers as to his true identity. But his concealment is not his achievement alone. The believer is praying for it (I, 5); it is God who makes it effective. Only He knows his servant. The success of his concealment is proof of his being elected.

The principle of dissimulation has a long prehistory. It was practiced already by the ancient Gnostics, who regarded the material world as created by an inferior evil god. This evil power, ignorant of the existence of a superior God, was also unable to recognize the true God's servants. Concealing their identity was part of the faith of the Gnostics.

This principle was later adopted by Shi'is, who repeatedly suffered persecution and made dissimulation a theological tenet.³⁵ Modern Shi'i theologians revised that dogma by emphasizing that the practice depended on the stage reached by the struggle for an Islamic order. They understood the notion more strategically, as Sunnis have long done. On the other hand certain Sunnis have adopted the Shi'i appreciation for secrecy,³⁶ as the Manual shows. This practice may also explain why some of the attackers lived a Western lifestyle, shaved their beards and drank alcohol.³⁷

In the Plane: A Martyr on the Path of God

Finally, the third stage of the action: the violence. Unnoticed, the hero has entered the plane, faintly reciting Koran and prayers. Now the issue of martyrdom becomes central. "Ask God to grant you martyrdom while you are on the attack, not in retreat, with perseverance and awareness" (II, 9). Martyrdom, too, is not an achievement by the believer, but something granted by God.³⁸ Prayer is needed to obtain it. But the willingness to sacrifice one's life is necessary.

³⁵ Hans G. Kippenberg, "Die Verheimlichung der wahren Identität vor der Außenwelt in der antiken und islamischen Religionsgeschichte," in Jan Assmann (ed.), *Die Erfindung des inneren Menschen: Studien zur religiösen Anthropologie*, Gütersloh: Mohn 1993, 183–98. Fundamental studies: Ignaz Goldziher, "Das Prinzip der takijja im Islam" (1906), in his *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5, Hildesheim: Olms 1970, 59–72; for the link to ancient religions see Heinz Halm, *Die islamische Gnosis: Die extreme Schia und die Alawiten*, Zürich: Artemis 1982; Etan Kohlberg, "Taqiyya in Shi'i Theology and Religion," in: Hans G. Kippenberg and Guy G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Secrecy and Concealment: Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions*, Leiden: Brill 1995, 345–80; Strothmann/Djebli, "Taqiyya," *Enc. Islam*, 2nd ed., 10:134–36.

³⁶ Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, London: Tauris 1986, 215; Abdulaziz A. Sachedina, *The Just Ruler in Shi'ite Islam*. Oxford: UP 1988, 112–14.

³⁷ See, for example, M. Ruthven, *A Fury for God*, 300.

³⁸ There is a tension between martyrdom as one's own deed and martyrdom as bestowed by God; cf. Ivan Strenski, "Sacrifice, Gift and the Social Logic of Muslim 'Human Bombers,'" in *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15 (2003) 1–34, at 12–13; Mneimneh and Makiya in Silvers and Epstein, *Striking Terror*, 317.

Upon the confrontation, hit as would hit heroes who desire not to return to the World, and loudly shout *Allahu akbar* ("God is greater"), since the proclamation of the name of God instills terror in the heart of the nonbelievers. God has said: "Smite them above the necks, and smite off all their fingertips." (III, 11)

The quotation envisions the attack in terms of the militant Medina scenario of Sura 8. The re-enactment of the sacred action ensures the warrior a superior reward: a wedding with the heavenly brides.

Know that the Heavens have raised their most beautiful decoration for you, and that your heavenly brides are calling you: "Come oh follower of God," while wearing their most beautiful jewelry. (III, 12)

The topic of the wedding of the martyr with the heavenly brides intensifies the feeling of inconceivability that befalls Western observers regarding Muslim concepts of martyrdom. Malise Ruthven has tried to open a path to an understanding: al-Ghazali (died 1111 CE), he reminds us, saw the sexual imagery of Paradise as an inducement to righteousness. The state of spiritual fulfilment can only be described in terms of familiar experiences.³⁹

The brute violence in the plane is seen as a re-enactment of the Medina *ghazwas*. The attackers should be happy to perform it. The killing is a sacrifice, offered for the sake of the parents (III, 13). In accordance with the custom of the Prophet, some form of symbolic booty should be taken from the killed, e.g., a cup or a glass of water, if possible (III, 14; cf. 24). No action is to be performed out of a desire for vengeance, in accordance with the model of Ali ibn Abi Talib (III, 16–18). The capture and killing of the prisoners are prescribed by the custom (*sunna*) of the Prophet (III, 19). When all goes as it was planned, the brothers are to congratulate each other (III, 20–21).

When the end draws close, it is recommended to cite some Koranic or poetic verses regarding the eternal life of the martyrs:

³⁹ *A Fury for God*, 102. At this point the framework of comparison should be expanded. The Christian appreciation for ascetic abstention as one of the highest religious values remained alien to Islam. Accordingly, the cultural category of the person in Islam lacks the critical ability to subordinate all natural desires to the reason of the agent — an ability that dominates even the post-Christian Western concept of person. A broader cultural analysis of the wedding topic is desirable.

When the moment of truth comes near, and zero hour is upon you, open your chest welcoming death on the path of God. Always remember to conclude with the prayer, if possible, starting it seconds before the target, or let your last words be: "There is none worthy of worship but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God." After that, God willing, the meeting is in the Highest Paradise, in the company of God. (III, 25–27)

The pedantic emulation of the custom of the Prophet may be seen as answering scruples. We know already from Lebanon in the eighties that forms of fighting that implied suicide caused serious scruples, since according to the accepted theological view suicide was a grave sin, and a person who committed it was doomed to Hell.⁴⁰ "The Muslim fighter needed answers to many questions," a Hizbollah cleric told in an interview, and went on to quote the questions that had been raised: "Is resistance to the occupation obligatory on religious grounds? What about the question of self-martyrdom?"⁴¹ Some of the fighters in Lebanon solicited a *fatwa* from Ayatollah Fadlallah that would sanction this kind of attacks once and for all. Fadlallah resisted the pressure, apparently in contrast to Ayatollah Khomeini to whom such a *fatwa* is in fact ascribed.⁴² Rumors went around that Fadlallah had blessed the suicide operations against the barracks in 1983, but he himself always denied them.⁴³ Minor clerics in Lebanon had less hesitation. "We believe that those who carried out suicide operations

⁴⁰ Martin Kramer, "The Moral Logic of Hizballah," in Walter Reich (ed.), *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*, Cambridge: UP 1990, 131–57, esp. 142–43, n. 24.

⁴¹ Martin Kramer, "Hizbullah: The Calculus of Jihad," in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Fundamentalism and the State: Remaking Politics, Economies, and Militancy* (The Fundamentalism Project, vol. 3), Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1993, 539–56, at 549.

⁴² Martin Kramer, "The Oracle of Hizbullah: Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah," in: R. Scott Appleby (ed.), *Spokesmen for the Despised: Fundamentalist Leaders of the Middle East*, Chicago: UP 1997, 83–181, at 112, information about Khomeini's *fatwa*.

⁴³ Kramer, "The Moral Logic of Hizballah," 142–49; Magnus Ranstorp, *Hizb'allah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis*, New York: St. Martin's Press 1997, 42.

against the enemy are indeed in Paradise,” a director of an Islamic institute in Tyre stated in an interview.⁴⁴ There are reasons to assume that some kind of — at least tacit — approval by religious authorities or communities was necessary to turn a suicide into self-martyrdom.⁴⁵ After the attacks of September 11, the German weekly *Der Spiegel* asked Ayatollah Fadlallah whether the attackers died as martyrs or not. His answer was surprisingly clear. “No,” he said, “they were not killed in a Jihad, a ‘Holy War.’ They simply committed suicide.”⁴⁶

The Subjective Meaning of the Attacks: Enforcing the Fear of God

The subjective meaning attributed to the violence in the Manual also had precursors in the Lebanon of the eighties. The United States and France had left Lebanon after terrifying suicidal attacks had been carried out on the barracks of their troops in October 1983. Some years later Israel followed. The withdrawal of these powers contributed tremendously to a high esteem of suicidal attacks in the Middle East. No one ever imagined or could imagine that a few dedicated Muslims could drive out the technologically superior American, French and Israeli troops from Lebanon. Yet they did. This success had an impact on Islamic theology. The leader of the Shi‘i community in Lebanon, Ayatollah Fadlallah, praised the actions against military targets as a “rebellion against fear.” Martin Kramer summarized his words as follows:

The great [Western] powers inspire “alarm and fear” among the oppressed, who have no more than “children’s toys” to mount their opposition. But by conquering their fear, through acceptance of the virtue of martyrdom, the oppressed can evoke alarm and fear among the oppressors. America and West, recalls one Hizbollah leader [i.e., Sadiq al-Musawi], “hurriedly ran away from three Muslims who loved martyrdom” and sacrificed themselves in suicidal attacks.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Kramer, “The Moral Logic of Hizballah,” 147.

⁴⁵ See Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, London: Victor Gollancz 1998: chapter on “Religion and Terrorism.”

⁴⁶ *Der Spiegel* 42/2001.

⁴⁷ Martin Kramer, *Hezbollah’s Vision of the West*, Washington: Institute for Near East Policy 1989 (Policy Papers, 16), 37–39, quotation on p. 39.

The global arrogance of the West represents a global unbelief, as also Fadlallah in an interview argued.⁴⁸ The power of the faithful consists in his ability to overcome the natural fear of death and to make the arrogant Western civilisation tremble. The battle cry *Allahu akbar*, which also resounded in the plane, expresses that aspiration.⁴⁹ Just as the Prophet, with only few followers, was able to defeat the superior armies of the *jahiliyya*, so the faithful Muslim today is able to humiliate Western civilization by means of its own panic. By fearing God more than all other powers and acting accordingly, a faithful Muslim can spread terror among the unbelievers. Usama bin Ladin's declaration of war of 1996 opened with three quotations from the Koran, placing the fear of God (*taqwa*) in the centre of the faith.⁵⁰

The Manual convinced the fighters in the plane that they were serving God with their actions. He would assist them as they sacrificed their lives in attacking the citadels of contemporary paganism: the economic power residing in the towers of the World Trade Centre, the military base at the Pentagon, and the political centre at the Capitol.⁵¹

The Social Form of the Attacking Teams: Usar (Families) and Ashira (Clan)

The attacks of September 11 were committed by groups that understood themselves as communities re-enacting the struggle for an Islamic

⁴⁸ "11 September, Terrorism, Islam, and the Intifada" (interview with Shaikh Muhammad Husain Fadlallah), in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31 (2002) 78–84, at 83.

⁴⁹ Thomas Scheffler, "'Allahu Akbar': Zur Theologie des Widerstandsgeistes im Islam," in André Stanisavljević and Ralf Zwengel (eds.), *Religion und Gewalt: Der Islam nach dem 11. September*, Potsdam: Mostar Friedensprojekt e.V. 2002, 21–46.

⁵⁰ Scheffler, "Allahu akbar," 31–32; the unabridged document in an English translation is published by Yonah Alexander and Michael S. Setnam, *Usama bin Ladin's al-Qaida: Profile of a Terrorist Network*, New Delhi: Aditya Books 2001, Appendix 1 A. About Usama's declaration of war and its context: Peter L. Bergen, *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden*, New York: Free Press 2001, ch. 5.

⁵¹ We know from Fouda's interview with Binalshibh that the Capitol and not the White House was the target of the plane that crashed prematurely in Pennsylvania (Fouda and Fielding, *Masterminds of Terror*, 127, 157–58).

state. Regarding this social form, again a closer look at the Lebanon and the Near East in the eighties is illuminating. The group that took responsibility for the attacks on the barracks in Beirut in October 1983 called itself *Islamic Jihad* (*al-jihad al-islami*) and was linked to the Shi'i "Party of God," the *Hizbollah*. *Hizbollah* was a network of *ulama* with their students (*taliban*), bonded together by divergent religious, local and political loyalties.⁵² But to describe this network as a 'party' or an 'organization' is certainly much too strong. *Hizbollah* leaders denied any direct involvement in the operations of the attackers and contended that *Islamic Jihad* was not a name of an organization, but a common designation for all kind of Islamic militant activities. The militant cells apparently operated independently of each other, only loosely connected by some person in the background, similar to a "brunch of grapes,"⁵³ or a "telephone organization."⁵⁴

The decentralized structure of Islamic groups was not without precedent, as the example of the Muslim Brothers shows. In Egypt in 1943, at a time of increasing pressure by government and police, the Muslim Brothers established a flexible, controllable and "natural" form of organization, which provided the chief instrument for mobilizing and safeguarding the loyalty of its members. The "family" (*usra*) became the basic unit of the Brothers; it was limited to five members, with one of them as the head. Four of these "families" (*usar*) formed a "clan" (*ashira*), directed by one of the heads of the families.⁵⁵ This system spread to the Muslim Brothers in Jordan, Gaza, and Syria, where the number of members of a "family" might grow to ten.⁵⁶

⁵² Stephan Rosiny, *Islamismus bei den Schiiten im Libanon: Religion im Übergang von Tradition zur Moderne*, Berlin: Das arabische Buch 1996, 123–36.

⁵³ Peter Waldmann, *Terrorismus: Provokation der Macht*, München: Gerling Akademie 1998, 61–68.

⁵⁴ Ranstorp, *Hizb'allah in Lebanon*, 62–65 ("Use of Cover names and Concealment by Hizb'allah in Abduction of Foreigners").

⁵⁵ Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, 32 (history), 177 (diagram of the entire organisation), 195–200 (function of the basic units).

⁵⁶ Denis Engelleder, *Die islamistische Bewegung in Jordanien und Palästina 1945–1989*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2002, 108–11; Johannes Reissner, *Ideologie*

Richard P. Mitchell and Denis Engelleder have examined the ideas and expectations related to that social form. The founder of the Muslim Brothers, Hasan al-Banna (1906–1949) expected from it a “recovery of the Islamic person.” The members would become familiar with each other and take mutual responsibility. To this end they should meet at least once a week to perform common religious duties, engage in establishing Islam in the personal sphere, have common meals, attend the Friday prayer, and contribute financially to a common till. The “family” was seen as a nucleus of Islam in a world ruled by non-Islamic values and norms.⁵⁷

This social form, highly appropriate to Islam in general, became dominant among Muslims who understood the present age in the Islamic countries as a new period of ignorance and paganism (*jahiliyya*). A major proponent of this diagnosis was the already mentioned Sayyid Qutb. The process through which the *jahiliyya* might be driven back and an Islamic polity erected depended on the existence of small, devoted communities. The restoration of Islam required a revolution lead by a vanguard that must begin by purging its own consciousness and by sweeping away the influence of the *jahiliyya* on the souls. The transition would unfold in two stages. From a hidden source, a person would acquire faith in the Koran. When three faithful Muslims had been touched by the faith, they would form a society (*jama‘a*) of their own, separate themselves from pagan society, and become a movement (*haraka*) struggling against it. This Islamization from below, as Kepel has called the model, was not unique to the Muslim Brothers, but was independently propagated in the Islamic World by the Society for the Propagation of Islam, *jama‘at al-tabligh*, founded in India 1927. In a world and age in which a new paganism (*jahiliyya*) ruled, the faithful could preserve their faith only by forming a community

und Politik der Muslimbrüder Syriens: Von den Wahlen 1947 bis zum Verbot unter Adib Ash-Shishakli 1952, Freiburg: Schwarz 1980, 103; Hans Günter Lobmeyer, *Opposition und Widerstand in Syrien*, Hamburg 1995 (not seen).

⁵⁷ Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, 195–200; Engelleder, *Die islamistische Bewegung*, 108–11.

(*jama'a*) with others, not individually. The social form of “families” and “clans” was an integral part of a particular scenario aiming at re-establishing Islam as a moral and legal order.⁵⁸

The following conclusion may be drawn from this analysis of the Manual and the social form of the attacking teams. The Manual is evidently not equivalent to a letter of confession. But that does not make it worthless for a reconstruction of the events of 9/11, as is often assumed. On the contrary! The Spiritual Manual allows us to reconstruct the subjective meaning connected to the massacre. Max Weber, who introduced the concept of subjective meaning, distinguished between the correctness of an action and its rationality. Most often the two coincide. But there are cases where the scholar must judge an action morally or cognitively incorrect while still acknowledging that the agent acted in a rational manner. For such situations Weber developed a particular approach.⁵⁹ The student should suspend his own moral or cognitive values and try to reconstruct the subjective meaning of the action performed. In such cases the rationality of the act is evaluated in terms of coherence.

The violence performed on 9/11 fulfills the requirement of coherence. The *ghazwa* depended on:

1. the purity of the intention of the attackers, uncontaminated by personal feelings of vengeance;
2. a meticulous re-enactment of Muhammad's raids at the time when he founded the Islamic polity;
3. the fear of God, displayed as a readiness for self-martyrdom and for inspiring terror in the unbelievers;
4. the existence of a group of dedicated young Muslims seeing themselves as the vanguard of an Islamic order.

⁵⁸ Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh* (French original 1984), Berkeley/Los Angeles 2003, 52–56.

⁵⁹ Max Weber, “Über einige Kategorien der verstehenden Soziologie” (1913), in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, ed. Johannes Winckelmann, Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck) 1968, 3rd ed., 427–74. Eng. transl.: “Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology,” translated by E.E. Graber, *The Sociological Quarterly* 22 (1981) 151–80.

The targets of the attack on 9/11 were chosen in agreement with widespread Muslim grievances about the devastating consequences of the political, economical and military power exercised by the United States in their countries. The *Spiritual Manual* does not explicitly refer to any of the injuries Muslims allegedly or actually had been suffering at the hands of the United States. The vindication for the attack is sought elsewhere. The example of Ali demonstrates this. As the model for every person who prepares for a *ghazwa*, Ali transformed every desire for vengeance into an unemotional act of punishment. The purity of intention is crucial for the correct exercise of violence. Legitimacy is achieved by re-enacting the historical example provided by the founding of the first Islamic state in Medina.

The “War on Terrorism” in the Light of the Spiritual Manual

In his book *Bush at War*, Bob Woodward reports how soon after the events the President and his aides adopted a particular understanding of what had happened, although their interpretation was not the only one possible. “They had declared war on us”; “We are at war.”⁶⁰ This interpretation was soon absorbed by a religious concept, which surfaced in speeches of the President, for example in President Bush’s “State of the Union” speech delivered on January 28, 2003 — after the War in Afghanistan but before the War against Iraq.⁶¹

Bush first addressed such issues as the growth of economy, affordable health care for all Americans, energy independence of the country, and charitable work done by the government nationally and internationally, before he turned to “man-made evil”: international terrorism.⁶² There are days, he said, when the citizens hear nothing about the war on terror. But for the President, “there’s never a day when I do not learn of another threat, or give an order in this global war against a scattered network of killers.” “The threat is new; America’s

⁶⁰ Bob Woodward, *Bush at War*, London: Simon & Schuster 2003, 15, 17.

⁶¹ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01>; see January 28.

⁶² Printed version, p. 6.

duty is familiar.” The terrorists are the successors of small groups whose ambitions of cruelty and murder in the 20th century had no limit. It is America’s mission by its might to end the terrible threats to the civilized world; America is defending a world of peace against a world of chaos. All nations are invited to join it in this war.

And yet the course of this nation does not depend on the decisions of others. (Applause.) Whatever action is required, whatever action is necessary, I will defend the freedom and security of the American people.⁶³

The speech here links up with a myth that permeates American popular culture in various forms:⁶⁴ whether as Captain America, Rambo, Terminator, or, as in the movie *Independence Day*, as the President himself, a superhero rescues innocent people from unrestricted frightening violence. Though the plot appears to be secular, it is in fact linked to a religious interpretation of the early history of the United States. The protestant settlers, who had left Europe to escape oppression, saw their fate in terms of the Exodus narrative. They were the new chosen people that had been forced to leave their homes. Like the Biblical Israel led by Moses they had to prove their faith in the wilderness. The settlement in America took the form of a struggle against dark hostile forces. Here, the idea was born that the new community in all its actions was responsible to God alone.⁶⁵ The recent refusal of the US government to submit to the United Nations is in line with this conviction. George W. Bush expressed this attitude by stating that although the US was asking the free nations to join it, “the course of this nation does not depend on the decisions of others.” Then he added a sentence that cast the President himself in the

⁶³ Printed version, p. 6.

⁶⁴ The history of that myth is presented by John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett, *The Myth of the American Superhero*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2002. A year later, the authors dealt with the recent adoption of it by George W. Bush, in *Captain America and the Crusade against Evil: The Dilemma of Zealous Nationalism*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2003.

⁶⁵ Ulrike Brunotte, *Puritanismus und Pioniergeist: Die Faszination der Wildnis im frühen Neu-England*, Berlin and New York: de Gruyter 2000.

role of a redeemer: "Whatever action is required, whenever action is necessary, I will defend the freedom and security of the American people."⁶⁶ That freedom, however, is not to be understood as America's gift to the world: "it is God's gift to humanity."⁶⁷ According to this rhetoric, the "War on Terror" unfolds as an apocalyptic scenario.

The "State of the Union" speech supports the point of view of historians who stress the dependence of the foreign policy of a country on its culture.⁶⁸ In the United States, religion has to be taken into account, in particular after its "return to the public square."⁶⁹ A particular brand of Protestantism, successful since the nineteenth century, deserves attention in this context. These Protestants were convinced that the Kingdom of God would not come gradually, but would be preceded by the Second Coming of Christ. While the elect would be saved immediately by "the rapture," the Antichrist and the godless would be destroyed by fierce battles. This philosophy of history, called pre-millennialism, was and is still popular, not only in the Fundamentalist camp, but also far beyond it, as the excellent study of Paul Boyer has shown by drawing upon a host of sources.⁷⁰ Adherents of this belief read the violent history of the twentieth century as the fulfillment of Biblical

⁶⁶ P. 6. We owe to Bruce Lincoln an analysis of the religious rhetoric of President Bush's speeches: *Holy Terrors*, 19–32; 99–101.

⁶⁷ P. 9.

⁶⁸ Akira Iriye, "Culture and International History," in Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson (eds.), *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, Cambridge: UP 1991, 214–25; Ursula Lehmkuhl, "Diplomatiegeschichte als internationale Kulturgeschichte: Theoretische Ansätze und empirische Forschung zwischen Historischer Kulturwissenschaft und Soziologischem Institutionalismus," *Geschichte und Gegenwart* 27 (2001) 394–423.

⁶⁹ Cf. William Martin, "With God on Their Side: Religion and U.S. Foreign Policy," in Hugh Heclo and Wilfred M. McClay (eds.), *Religion Returns to the Public Square: Faith and Policy in America*, Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press 2003, 327–59.

⁷⁰ Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 1992.

prophecies. The apocalyptic clock is ticking again; international political developments regarding Israel indicate the time on the clock. The Balfour declaration of 1917, the proclamation of Israel as a state in 1948, the recapture of the Old City of Jerusalem and the occupation of the rest of Biblical Israel in 1967 — all these occurrences were enthusiastically greeted by that brand of American Protestants. The Gulf War of 1991, finally, triggered a new wave of expectations, inspired by Saddam Hussein's plan for rebuilding ancient Babylon. There is no direct link between theology and politics. But foreign policy regarding issues in the Near East can be made plausible by rhetorically striking such religious chords. With the "War on Terrorism" a new chapter in the history of US Near East policies was opened.

In 1983, the US State Department laid down the following definition of terrorism:

Terrorism is premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.⁷¹

Since this definition determines the foreign policy of the United States, a closer look is appropriate. It turns out that the definition is too narrow and too broad at the same time. It is too narrow since it does not recognize states as responsible for acts of terror. Muslims today complain about violations of their rights perpetrated by states in such places as Palestine and Chechnya. The dialectics of "One Person's Terrorist is Another's Freedom Fighter" is suspended.⁷²

On the other hand the definition is too broad, since it does not evaluate the violence of sub-national groups in terms of moral reasons. If every kind of violence of sub-national groups against non-combatant

⁷¹ Quoted from James Sterba, "Terrorism and International Justice," in idem (ed.), *Terrorism and International Justice*, New York and Oxford: UP 2003, 206–28, at 206.

⁷² Robert Kennedy, "Is One Person's Terrorist Another's Freedom Fighter? Western and Islamic Approaches to 'Just War' Compared," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 11 (1999) 1–21.

targets is simply an evil act, whatever reasons the agents may have become politically irrelevant. The war against terrorism thus becomes a war of uncertain duration against unpredictable outbursts of violence.

Diego Gambetta has brilliantly analysed significant comments made by the secretary of defence Donald Rumsfeld in June 2002 during a press conference.⁷³ Rumsfeld told the audience that he regularly reads intelligence information in order to assess the threat to the US. In the course of doing that he had found that there are things we know and there are things we know that we don't know: "known unknowns." But, he added, there are also certain things "we don't know we don't know": "unknown unknowns." In a country where many people are obsessed with the imminent rise of the Antichrist, such a formula may be more easily accepted than elsewhere. The Antichrist in the US is identical with its political enemies — today al-Qa'ida.⁷⁴ Needless to say, in the light of that concept, the Spiritual Manual is at best irrelevant, at worst misleading.

Nothing illustrates this point better than the recent 9/11 Commission Report. It describes the attackers in the following words:

We learned about an enemy who is sophisticated, patient, disciplined, and lethal. The enemy rallies broad support in the Arab and Muslim world by demanding redress of political grievances, but its hostility toward us and our values is limitless. Its purpose is to rid the world of religious and political pluralism, the plebiscite, and equal rights for women. It makes no distinction between military and civilian targets. *Collateral damage* is not in its lexicon.⁷⁵

The report reconstructs with extreme precision the chain of events preceding the attack, but completely ignores the Spiritual Manual. The Manual required that during the last Night, all fighters should

⁷³ Diego Gambetta, "Reason and Terror: Has 9/11 Made it Hard to Think Straight?" *Boston Review* April/May 2004 (internet version). Gambetta supplies the quotation from D. Rumsfeld.

⁷⁴ Robert Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist: The History of an American Obsession*, New York and Oxford: UP 1995.

⁷⁵ *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, New York: W.W. Norton 2004, p. xvi.

perform rituals, recitations and prayers. According to the Commission report, however, Muhammad Atta and Abdul Aziz al-Omari that night pursued “ordinary activities: making ATM withdrawals, eating pizza, and shopping at a convenience store.”⁷⁶ The concept of a war against evil portrays the attackers as devoid of religious faith.

Terrorism and International Justice

A collection of articles edited by James T. Sterba under the title *Terrorism and International Justice*⁷⁷ envisions the possibility of a different response to 9/11. Though that alternative answer sounds like a utopia, it helps to understand the implications of the answer that was actually given. The interpretation of the violence could have been different: not as a warlike attack upon the United States, but as a crime against humanity. If that interpretation had been chosen, the culprits would have had to be prosecuted and put to trial by international organizations and courts;⁷⁸ the defendants would have had to declare in public why they thought they had the right to attack Americans and kill more than three thousand civilians. In a public trial for crimes against humanity the ritualistic performance of the crime would have lost all plausibility. The militant Islamic networks would have been forced to explain their stance with regard to abrogating tolerant verses in the Koran and replacing them by violent ones. All prophetic religions dispose of a store of traditions, many of which contradict each other. It is the believer who authorizes one and ignores the others. The process of selection is his responsibility. Even the choice of an ethic of conviction instead of an ethic of responsibility has to be defended in public.

An additional reason why such a public trial would have been desirable is the spreading of Islamic networks in the Middle East and

⁷⁶ *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 253.

⁷⁷ See n. 70.

⁷⁸ Daniele Archibugi and Iris Maron Young, “Envisioning a Global Rule of Law,” in Sterba, *Terrorism and International Justice*, 158–70.

globally. While Europeans and Americans expect political institutions to ensure the citizens active participation in the social and political processes, in the Middle East civil society often converges with Islamic networks rather than with political institutions. In this situation the developments in the social form of Islam deserve our attention.

A public trial might also have helped to find a language that acknowledges Muslim grievances about the West without diminishing the severity of the crime committed. What we need are voices that help expanding our understanding of today's Muslims. Instead of looking upon 9/11 as an irrational massacre, we need to hear voices that counteract the temptation to ignore the conflicts from which it was born.⁷⁹ In this regard, a metaphor used by Ayatollah Fadlallah in his interview may be helpful:

There is no such thing as an Islamic terrorist spirit. What exists is a situation where you corner people and close off all exits, and these people then have to react in an abnormal way.⁸⁰

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⁷⁹ One attempt has been made by Ted Honderich: *After the Terror*, Edinburgh: UP 2003.

⁸⁰ "11 September" (see n. 48), 83.

THE ETHICS OF WAR AND THE CONCEPT OF WAR IN INDIA AND EUROPE

TORKEL BREKKE

Summary

The European just war tradition makes a distinction between matters of just resort to war (*jus ad bellum*) and matters of just means in war (*jus in bello*). If one compares the just war tradition with ethical systems of other cultures, one is struck by the European concern about *jus ad bellum* and the lack of interest in the same in other traditions. I compare the ethics of war in two important literary traditions of classical Hinduism with the European just war tradition. Our problem: Why were Europeans so interested in matters of *jus ad bellum* (in particular the principle of right authority) and why did Hindu writers take so little interest in the same questions? I suggest the following answer. In medieval and early modern Europe there was great interest in *jus ad bellum* because Europeans had a concept of war that made two important distinctions. The European concept of war distinguished, firstly, war against external enemies from violence against internal enemies and, secondly, public from private violence. Some important studies of the ethics of war have asserted that these two distinctions are universal. I argue, on the contrary, that these two distinctions are unique to Europe. Hindu writers had a fundamentally different concept of war. They did not make the same distinctions. I argue that this conceptual difference explains why Europeans were so concerned about *jus ad bellum* while Indians were not.

The comparative ethics of war is the academic study of how different civilizations have dealt with basic ethical questions surrounding war.¹ The comparative ethics of war is not a very old or large

¹ This article builds partly on previous research, where I have benefited from comments from Professor John Kelsay of Florida State University and Professor G. Scott Davis of the University of Richmond. I am grateful to Professor Henrik Syse and Professor Gregory Reichberg of PRIO for discussions and comments on an earlier version of this paper.

academic field.² However, it is a field that is likely to grow because of its obvious relevance in our times. The Gulf war of 1990 showed an almost complete lack of attention to comparative issues in the contemporary literature on ethics and war, John Kelsay has observed.³ The debate about the war in Iraq in 2003/04, and about the war against terrorism, shows that there is still a lack of knowledge about questions of ethics and war across cultural borders. In the words of James Turner Johnson, we need to understand how cultural factors bear on conflicts and we need to understand the normative conceptions of statecraft within particular cultural contexts.⁴ The International Association for the History of Religion have aptly chosen the theme *Religion: Conflict and Peace* for their 19th World Congress in Tokyo in 2005. The comparative ethics of war must be an important issue under this heading.

The academic study of the ethics of war often takes the European just war tradition as its point of departure and this tradition makes a useful analytical distinction between matters of just resort to war (*jus ad bellum*) and matters of just means in war (*jus in bello*).⁵ There seems to be fundamental differences between the just war tradition of Christian Europe and the ethical systems of other civilizations on matters of *jus ad bellum*. In my opinion, these differences pose some

² From the 1990s several important books and articles have been published comparing the ethics of war in Christian and Islamic traditions. See especially Johnson and Kelsay 1990 and Kelsay and Johnson 1991. However, only a handful of articles have been published that include other civilizations in the study of the comparative ethics of war.

³ Kelsay 1993:1.

⁴ Johnson 1999:189.

⁵ The *jus ad bellum* are criteria defining the right resort to force. It typically lists issues like: 1) Just cause for war; 2) Right authority for initiating war; 3) Right intention for waging war; 4) Proportionality of ends; 5) War as last resort. The two basic criteria for the *jus in bello* are: 1) Proportionality of means; 2) Noncombatant protection or immunity from intentional harm. These criteria are discussed by many authors. See for instance Johnson 1999:27–40.

of the most intriguing questions for the comparative ethics of war. If one compares the just war tradition with ethical systems of other cultures, one is struck by the European concern about *jus ad bellum* and the lack of interest in the same in other traditions.

This is the case for Hindu India. India has produced mountains of literature about war. However, Indian writers are never concerned with *jus ad bellum*. In this article, I intend to compare classical Hinduism with the European just war tradition and I intend to offer an answer to the question of why Hindu ethical tradition shows little or no concern for matters of *jus ad bellum*. The problem could be framed in two ways. Why were pre-modern Europeans so interested in matters of *jus ad bellum*? In particular, why were they so concerned with matters of right authority? Alternatively, one might turn the question around and ask: Why did pre-modern Hindu writers take so little interest in the same questions? I suggest the following answer. In medieval and early modern Europe there was great interest in matters of right authority in war because European thinkers — mostly theologians and lawyers — at least from the late 13th century onwards had a concept of war that made two important distinctions. Firstly, the European concept of war distinguished violence against external enemies from violence against internal enemies. Secondly, the European concept of war distinguished between public and private war, between *bellum* and *duellum*. In India, there was almost no interest in right authority because Hindu writers on ethics and politics did not possess a concept of war that distinguished clearly between violence against external and internal enemies. To be sure, there were probably a number of additional reasons why a detailed discourse on right authority and other issues of the *jus ad bellum* developed in Christian culture and not in India. However, I believe it is of great importance to explore conceptual or epistemological points in the study of war. It is precisely on conceptual and comparative matters — i.e., problems that are by their nature closely linked to linguistics, philology, history and theology — that historians of religions can make an important contribution to the study of war.

The Importance of a Conceptual Approach to War

Are there conceptual problems in the comparative study of war and the ethics of war? There certainly are. If we look at Islamic, Hindu, Chinese or Aztec history we can identify any number of practices, ideas and objects that relate to what we call *war* in English. However, without a deeper knowledge of the civilization in question we do not know whether its language(s) and world view(s) contain concepts that overlap with the European concept of war. As I will show, the Indian concepts of organized violence (carried by Sanskrit terms like *vigraha*, *yuddha* or *daṇḍa* and all their cognates) are different from the European concept of war and they make for different ideas on the ethics of war. Thus, the requirement of a thorough historical exploration of concepts of war and violence is a basic assumption of my approach to the field.

Scholarly writing in the history of religions has shown an increasing awareness of the fundamental conceptual problems associated with studying non-western religions. I believe this relatively recent awareness in the history of religions might serve as a model for a more sophisticated approach to the comparative study of war and ideologies of war. One rather provocative conclusion has been to question the very existence of religion in the pre-modern world. Religion has no independent existence apart from the academy; it is created by the imagination of the scholar, Jonathan Z. Smith has stated.⁶ In my view, Smith's point is important first of all because it forces the scholar of religion to be highly critical of his or her own ways of analysing religion in history. But the conclusion to be drawn from Smith's observations is certainly not that we should stop studying pre-modern religions because they do not really exist. The point is rather that we need a special kind of self-consciousness in our approach to the issue of religion. Let us apply the same historical, comparative and conceptual sophistication when we study war across cultures.

⁶ Smith 1982:xi.

A proper understanding of concepts in history requires philological work and it requires a degree of theoretical sophistication. I would suggest that the idea of *differentiation* might help us in the difficult task of understanding the development of different concepts of violence and war. The sociological/historical concept of differentiation is complex and ambiguous. On the one hand *differentiation* can refer to a state. When we talk about differentiation, we often mean the end state of the process of modernization. One of the most important aspects of modernization is functional and social differentiation, i.e., the compartmentalization of social life into more or less autonomous spheres of activity, like politics, law, economy and religion. Differentiation is important for an understanding of pre-modern religion because it was at the heart of the secularization of European societies.⁷ On the other hand, *differentiation* can refer to a general process. In this sense, the idea of differentiation entails the idea of drawing boundaries and creating distinctions. My suggestion here is that the differentiation of a concept of war from other kinds of violence — encompassing the differentiation of public from private and external from internal — was something specifically European. In Europe, public war was clearly differentiated from other types of organized violence, like punishment, for instance.⁸ Let me point out that I am not suggesting an evolutionary approach to the subject of the ethics of war.⁹ I do not say, or imply, that Europe *progressed* while other civilizations remained

⁷ See for instance Bruce 2003. See also the ideas of Niklas Luhmann on differentiation in several of his works, for instance Luhmann 1982.

⁸ The relationship between punishment and war in European thought is complex and can not be dealt with here. I have treated the relationship between war and punishment in the classical Indian tradition of political science in Brekke 2004.

⁹ The idea of differentiation was often discussed in an evolutionary context by functionalist sociologists. See for instance Parsons 1964. Niklas Luhmann seems to have rejected some of the more teleological assumptions in the functionalism of his teacher, Talcott Parsons. Luhmann did treat issues of violence and war in the framework of his systems theory seeing the monopolization of violence as an aspect of the differentiation of a political system in early modern Europe. See Luhmann 2000.

backward. I will argue that the preoccupation with *jus ad bellum* in the Christian tradition must be explained, at least partly, by the special concept of war found in the Christian tradition.

My argument will start from an exploration and a comparison of concepts in the European and Indian traditions. I will argue that in Hindu culture, the distinctions between external and internal violence and between public and private war did not exist. (If they existed they were far less pronounced and did not have any ethical relevance.) The sovereign who had a right and responsibility to maintain order in society by the use of violence would also have a right and a duty to use violence against external enemies in the interest of himself or his society. Thus, there are basic conceptual reasons explaining why Hindu writers and thinkers were not inclined to discuss questions of *jus ad bellum*, like legitimate authority.

The European Concept of War — A Universal Standard?

It might be tempting to look at the development of the just war tradition in Europe as the universal standard and to look at the ethics of war in other cultures as deviations from, or approximations to, that standard. Clearly, when one wants to compare different religions or cultures one needs a place to start from; I am applying the analytic distinctions of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* borrowed from the just war tradition throughout this article. Moreover, one might argue that the just war tradition has a special status among the ethical traditions of the world because it gave birth to modern international laws of war.

Did the ethical traditions pertaining to war in other civilizations develop along the same lines as the just war tradition of Europe? This seems to be the assumption in some of the writing of James Turner Johnson, who is one of the most important contemporary scholars in the comparative ethics of war. Johnson has discussed the relationship between internal and external violence and public and private violence in several works, most notably in *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War*.¹⁰ Johnson offers a theory of how cultures come to

¹⁰ Johnson 1981.

lay down rules for resort to violence. He believes that one can observe a pendulum movement between two different states: Firstly, there is a state where violent conflict is frequent but at the same time the nature of conflicts are gamelike and circumscribed by rules and conventions. Secondly, there is the state when a culture starts setting limits to the resort to violence, as control of who may fight and who has the authority to initiate war. Organized violence is compartmentalized into external and internal and a distinction is made between public and private violence or *duellum* and *bellum* to use the Latin terms. I used the term *differentiation* to describe this process. Private violence is essentially outlawed and there develops a concept of war as external and public violence. If I read Johnson correctly, he believes that these distinctions are universal and that all cultures thus faced a dual problem with regard to the regulation of violence.¹¹ But is this a global pattern? I believe there is good reason to question Johnson's view that all cultures faced the same two problems — i.e., external vs. internal and public vs. private violence — and that we “can learn a great deal about regulation of violence in any human culture by considering how this particular culture [i.e. Europe] dealt with these twin problems.”¹²

In his book on the laws of war in the late Middle Ages, M.H. Keen stresses the importance of the definition of war.¹³ What did war mean to late medieval lawyers? What was the accepted definition? As I have already indicated, this question is of central importance also in our attempt to understand the development of *jus ad bellum* in a comparative perspective. If we can find out what war meant in the formative period of European just war tradition, then we can start to ask whether or not other cultures — India, China, Islam — had concepts that overlapped with the European concept of war. The answer to this question must be of fundamental importance to the academic study of the ethics of war in a comparative perspective.

The thirteenth century is the period when the European concept of war developed. Gratian's *Decretum* is often taken as the point of

¹¹ Johnson 1981:44.

¹² Johnson 1981:44.

¹³ Keen 1965.

departure for theological and judicial writing on war but the Decretists (those who took the *Decretum* as foundational text) did not distinguish clearly between war and other hostile acts. In the mid-thirteenth century Hostiensis made the most extensive categorisation of warfare of the period dividing war into seven different types.¹⁴ The first was the Roman war, a just war waged by good Christians against infidels Rome being the head of the faith. The second type of war was judicial war fought on the judicial authority of someone with the right authority and was enforcing judicial order. The third type of war was the presumptuous and unjust war waged by those who opposed judicial authority of the second type. The fourth type of war was a just war was that waged by those who possessed legal authority to repel injuries to one's associates. The fifth type was the unjust war waged in opposition to the fourth type. The sixth type was an unjust war of attack waged on private authority and this type, commented Hostiensis, was widespread among the princes of his times. The seventh type of war was a just defence against the sixth type. Thus, war could be of many kinds. Moreover, in this period, according to lawyers, there were a number of types of large-scale violence that were not war. For instance, armed action to enforce lawful authority was not to be regarded as war but rather as the exercise of justice, according to late medieval lawyers.¹⁵ In fact, according to the lawyers of this period armed struggles that were not declared by a sovereign authority were not really wars at all. Only he who has no superior can declare a real war, according to most lawyers.¹⁶ Right authority was the pivotal argument in judging the justice of war.

On the matter of differentiating external from internal violence we need look no further than the greatest of the medieval scholastics, Thomas Aquinas. He defines war (*bellum*), brawling (*rixa*) and sedition (*sedition*) by pointing to two basic differences. Firstly, there is the

¹⁴ In the following I rely on Russell 1975:129–30.

¹⁵ Keen 1965:68.

¹⁶ Keen 1965:68–69.

difference that both war and brawling entails actual fighting or conflict, while sedition can be either actual hostilities or preparations for them.

The second difference is that while a war, properly speaking, is against an external enemy (*bellum proprie est contra extraneos et hostes*), one nation as it were against another (*quasi multitudinis ad multitudinem*), and brawls are between individuals, one against one or a few against a few, sedition in its proper sense is between mutually dissident sections of the same people.¹⁷

Sedition attacks the special good which is the unity and peace of a people. As opposed to schism, it attacks the temporal or secular unity of a people rather than the spiritual or ecclesiastical unity. When a prince was faced with a revolt or rebellion it was his duty to strike it down with force. However, this type of large-scale use of violence did not constitute real war, only an exercise of jurisdiction.¹⁸

If we move ahead to the mid-fourteenth century, Europe had developed a universal legal framework for the laws of war. The generally accepted treatise on the law of war was Honoré Bonet's *Tree of Battles*. Honoré Bonet was a lawyer and his work was to a large extent a French translation of more complex works of earlier lawyers. His most important source was *Tractatus de bello* by John of Legnano, professor of civil law at Bologna. The accepted sources on war could, according to contemporary thought, be traced back through John of Legnano and the Church fathers and directly back to the Romans.¹⁹ Roman law — the canon law of the Roman Church and the civil law of the Roman Empire — was seen as the ultimate source of chivalry and laws of war in the late Middle Ages. The constables and marshals of medieval Europe, the people judging cases by military law, were seen as lineal descendents of the Roman *magistri militum*. The law of arms in the fourteenth and fifteenth century Europe was international law and it applied to wars between nations that were part of the Roman people.²⁰

¹⁷ *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2æ. 42, I (Question 42. sedition).

¹⁸ Russell 1975:146.

¹⁹ Keen 1965:21.

²⁰ Keen 1965:57–59.

If we move further ahead to the Renaissance, we find that the specifically European concept of war is taken as the point of departure in most discussions about war and ethics. Christine de Pizan writes inside a tradition where there is a clear differentiation between war and other types of organized violence. In *The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry* she says that both divine law grants that wars and battles waged for a just cause is a proper execution of justice in the same way as laws drawn up by people to suppress the arrogant and evildoers.²¹ War and other kinds of organized violence are finely differentiated by Christine and she is clearly indebted to earlier writers, like John of Legnano. For instance, in Part IV of the *The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry*, Christine looks into the matter of organized violence similar to war. She is very negative to the practice of giving letters of Marque. This is described as “another sort of contention that in some circumstances lead to war,” in which a man, who cannot have his due for some injury, is given by the king a permission to seize the goods of all people from the country of the one who has committed the wrong.²² Christine takes the example of a merchant who has his goods stolen by the people of a city. In such a case, may any lord decree reprisals against that city and its people? Christine’s answer is in the negative because reprisals are similar to war on the question of lawful authority. “As this matter of ordering reprisals, according to its nature and condition, is similar to war, nobody can give them if he is not a sovereign lord.”²³ Right authority is the *sine qua non* of war and organized violence in general, both externally and internally. Christine offers an interesting argument for the irreligious nature of private war or single combat. She argues that whoever wants to punish a secret fault, a crime that cannot be dealt with according to normal judicial procedures, is trying to usurp the

²¹ Pizan 1999:14.

²² Pizan 1999:192–93.

²³ Pizan 1999:195. (*Tree of battles* 4.81–82. See Keen 1965:41–42.)

divine power and wisdom of God, to whom alone belongs the right to punish.²⁴

This was a very brief discussion, based mostly on secondary sources, about the development of a European concept of war. We can draw some conclusions. According to the concept of war that developed in this period, war was a very specific state of affairs publicly initiated by a prince with sovereign authority. War was public, as opposed to duels or private wars, and war was directed against an external political body, as opposed to for instance brawling or sedition, as Thomas Aquinas pointed out. The distinction was clear-cut and would later develop into a distinction between the functions of police and military with different rules and standards for the external and the internal aspects of the state's use of violence.²⁵ Clearly, these topics are connected to the early origins of the state-system in Europe. However, the connections between war and the early state is an established field and it is not possible to go into details here.²⁶ The next step in my argument will be to demonstrate that this concept of war never existed in pre-modern India.

The Indian Concept of War — Public and Private Violence

Let us turn to our comparative project and explore the concept(s) of war in Hindu India. My thesis here is that there did not take place

²⁴ Pizan 1999:198–99.

²⁵ Reichberg 2004.

²⁶ A classic formulation of this relationship is the thesis of a military revolution in late 16th century Europe producing changes in government and society. Major changes in military tactics and technology in this period necessitated large standing armies. The military revolution required more complex and centralized governments, which brought about the modern state. This thesis has been advanced by Geoffrey Parker in Parker 1996. The theory of military technology as a cause of political and historical change has been criticized by Jeremy Black, among others. Black sees the wider social organization of European societies, including military organization, as more important than technological innovation *per se*. See Black 1991. See also Waltz 2001.

a differentiation between public and private violence and I will try to show what I mean by looking at two central sources of the Indian tradition. First, I will look at the epic tradition represented by the Mahābhārata. This literary tradition is notoriously difficult to date and its use as historical evidence is problematic.²⁷ Still, the great epics are the most important lasting expressions of an ideology, or several ideologies, of war and ethics in the Hindu tradition. Secondly, in order to balance the mythical and narrative material concerning war found in the epic literature, I intend to look at the tradition of statecraft represented by Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra. Kauṭilya presents a pragmatic view of war which is very far removed from the epic view.²⁸

Hindu ideas on war have often been seen as following a completely different type of rationality from other world religions. This alien rationality has been summed up in one word: *karmayoga*. The *locus classicus* for this view of war is the Bhagavadgītā, which is part of the Mahābhārata and the most famous text of the epic literature of Hinduism. In the Bhagavadgītā, Kṛṣṇa tells the warrior Arjuna to see the fighting itself as the end of the war. He should not think about the fruits of the battle.²⁹ Fighting is a goal in itself for Arjuna because he is a warrior and by carrying out his duty he lives in accordance with *dharma*. The wise teacher Bhīṣma explains that battle itself is a great sacrifice. Every soldier who advance against the enemy in battle takes part in the sacrifice of battle (*yuddhayajña*). The flesh and the blood of the dead become oblations, and mutilated bodies, bones,

²⁷ See the classic works: Oldenberg 1922, and Holtzmann 1892–95. See also Hildebeitel 2001.

²⁸ I will refer to Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra as KA from now. It is necessary to avoid the complex debate about the different conceptualizations of the pre-modern Indian state here. For a summary of this debate see Kulke 1997, especially the detailed introductory essay by the editor. My focus will exclusively be on ideology of war in Hindu India rather than actual state formations. Clearly, I do not claim that the epic literature or the Arthaśāstra reflect actual political circumstances at any point in the history of South Asia.

²⁹ Verse 2.30ff. Buitenen 1981:76–79.

hair, severed heads, weapons, elephants and even the sounds of cutting and piercing have precise functions in the sacrifice of battle, according to Bhīṣma.³⁰ Such references have made scholars conclude that the Mahābhārata war really is a sacrifice.³¹

Ritualizing violence in literature along these lines might be analysed as one way of solving moral problems connected with the ethics of war. In a recent essay on the ethics of war in Hinduism, Francis X. Clooney points out that sacrificial violence is generally justified because it is required by the Veda, whereas killing for mundane goals is always forbidden, according to the dominant ethical traditions of Hinduism.³² Georg von Simson has argued that the Mahābhārata reveals a certain ambiguity when it deals with points of fighting and killing that violate basic Hindu ideas of *jus in bello*, proper conduct in battle.³³ It seems that the Brahmins who have told and retold the story through the ages have sought for ways to overcome the moral inconsistencies in the text. The contextualization of the war as a sacrifice solves this ethical problem by saying that all the belligerents of the epic in a sense agree on the choreography of this violent ritual. Furthermore, we might add that by conflating ideas of sacrifice and war the Hindu world developed its very own version of the holy war. In particular, the idea of holy war is apparent when central characters of the epic talk about the role of Kṛṣṇa in the fighting. To Kṛṣṇa, war is a game. As the high god he is beyond moral considerations. At the same time, the active participation of Kṛṣṇa in the battle guarantees the righteousness of Arjuna's cause. Where Kṛṣṇa is, there is *dharma*, and where *dharma* is, there is victory.³⁴ This form of religious legitimation for violence corresponds well with the classic formulations of the holy war idea in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

³⁰ Śāntiparvan 99.13.

³¹ A recent example is Jatavallabhula 1999.

³² Clooney 2003.

³³ Simson 1969.

³⁴ Simson 1969:174.

We could perhaps speculate about whether the religious and political roles of Kṛṣṇa or Rāma in the epics are a way for this literary tradition to avoid questions of *jus ad bellum*. God rarely needs to justify his actions. The fact remains that the Mahābhārata often treats topics that correspond closely with the European *jus in bello* but never topics that concern *jus ad bellum*. In sections and discussions about the duties of the king in the Mahābhārata we will not find clear statements about the right authority to initiate war or what constitutes a just cause for war. On the other hand, the way in which the war is fought — the *jus in bello* — is important in the epic world view because war is the private business of heroes as opposed to the increasingly public war of the embryonic European states of the late Middle Ages. A king must not wage war by unjust means, according to the teacher Bhīṣma of the Mahābhārata. What kind of ruler would rejoice in an unjust victory (*adharmavijaya*)? he asks.³⁵ A victory won through unrighteousness weakens both the king himself and the world. The king should try to conquer by any righteous means he can, because it is his duty as king. However, he must never wish to conquer through illusion or magic or deceit.³⁶

In short, the concept of war that we find in the great epics of classical Hinduism does not distinguish between private and public war. *Bellum* was not differentiated from *duellum*, to use the terms introduced in the discussion of Europe. The world of the Hindu epics is a world of individual heroes, not that of systematic warfare. Great warriors go to heaven when they die, whereas the warrior who dies in bed or runs away from danger goes to hell. The ethos of this world is summed up in the verse: “There is nothing higher in the three worlds than heroism (*śaurya*).”³⁷ In the epic, duels between heroes are fought alongside, or rather as constituent parts of a larger wars. In fact, the numerous duels of the Mahābhārata constitute the great

³⁵ Śāntiparvan 97.1.

³⁶ Śāntiparvan 97.23.

³⁷ Śāntiparvan 100.18.

war between the armies at Kurukṣetra. The concept of war found in the epic literature makes for concern about the rules pertaining to *jus in bello*, i.e., rules on the conduct of battle. On matters of *jus in bello*, the Mahābhārata may easily be compared to the European tradition. In fact, when we look at specific rules in warfare found in the Mahābhārata, we will find that many of them seem to be part of a code of chivalry akin to that of medieval Europe. For instance, there is a developed notion of noncombatant immunity. The aged, the children, women, monks, one who shows he surrenders, must not be killed.³⁸ One must not kill those who are sleeping, those who are thirsty, those who are wearied, one who is disordered or confused one who has started out for liberation, one who is on the move one who is walking, one who is drinking or eating, or one who is scattered in the mind, or one who has been struck, one who has been weakened. Moreover, a soldier whose armour is broken, one who says “I am yours,” one who folds his hands or one who has thrown down his weapons may be taken prisoner but may not be killed.³⁹

The Mahābhārata has a central position in the Hindu tradition. However, the other great Indian epic, the Rāmāyaṇa, has probably been just as important, or even more so, for Hindu identity through history. Rāma’s righteous rule is the paradigm of Hindu kingship. Some notes on the terminology of the epic literature on war may be appropriate here. The Rāmāyaṇa has nearly six thousand occurrences of terms denoting military action.⁴⁰ These are most frequent in the Book of the Battle describing the clash between the armies of Rāma and of his foe. The Rāmāyaṇa abounds in terminology for weaponry and army-formations. The most frequently mentioned type of soldier is the chariot-warrior and the most frequent type of combat is the duel between two equal opponents in chariots. A very frequent term to denote war-like action is *yuddha*. *Yuddha* is a Sanskrit word widely

³⁸ Śāntiparvan 99.47.

³⁹ Śāntiparvan 97.3.

⁴⁰ Brockington 1984:133.

used in the epics to refer to fighting. It is often made to correspond to our *war* or more often to *battle*. *Yuddha* refers to practices that we may safely call *war* but it also refers to other things that falls outside the scope of war. In the Rāmāyaṇa *yuddha* embraces duels and limited combats between groups of men, i.e., private violence that does not fall within the European concept of war. The important point for the general thesis of this article is the fact that the same expression is used for the duel as for the larger battle and the war in general. Serious distinctions of the level of violence — individual/collective and private/public — are not made. In the Rāmāyaṇa, as in the Mahābhārata duels take place in the context of a larger battle. The duel is typically ordered in its form, the warriors are supposed to be of comparatively equal strength and nobody is allowed to interrupt or assist in any way. One reference to chariot-battle might suggest that the authors or redactors of the Rāmāyaṇa knew more widely accepted rules for this type of warfare: In Rāma's last combat, he fights from the ground while his enemy is still mounted on his chariot and the gods interrupt the duel on the grounds that it is unfair.⁴¹ We recall here the similar instances in the Mahābhārata where warriors are chastised for engaging in battles against foes with different types of weapons and armour. The rules for just warfare in the Rāmāyaṇa belong to a world of individual heroes and when applied in the discussion of larger battles or wars, a sense of incongruity sometimes surfaces, as it does in the Mahābhārata. The direct references to a systematic theory of war or statecraft in the Rāmāyaṇa are not many. However, there are hints from which we may induce the existence of a general body of statecraft related to the Arthaśāstra tradition mentioned above. This body of literature is our next focus in our search for a concept of war that corresponds with the one we identified in late medieval Europe.

⁴¹ Brockington 1984:136.

The Indian Concept of War — External and Internal Violence

I now turn to the second, and far more important, process of differentiation identified with the European concept of war, i.e., the differentiation of external war from internal violence. We saw that in the epic literature of India, war is private and duels are not conceptually distinct from the clashes of great armies. Things look different if we move to the classical Indian literature on statecraft, the *Arthaśāstra*. This literature describes the ideal state and the ideal king and it presents us with conceptualisations of violence that are very different from that of the great epics. In fact, on the surface, the scheme of the *Arthaśāstra* on military matters seems to have far more in common with ideas of war in late medieval Europe.

Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* is about a type of state where there are far more advanced notions of violence as part of the functions of a state than in other genres of classical Indian literature. In Kauṭilya's ideal state, every important function of society is regulated or monopolized by the king. For instance, the king must employ directors of trade, he needs superintendents of everything from forest produce to alcoholic beverages to prostitutes, he must standardize weights and measures etc. One of the most important signs of a move away from a culture of private warfare is the monopolization of the means of violence by the state. In Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* we get a picture of a political entity which is highly centralized and where the means of violence are exclusively the concern of the king. Some of the duties of the superintendent of the armoury, Kauṭilya describes thus:

The Superintendent of the Armoury should cause to be made machines for use in battles, for the defence of forts and for assault on the enemy's cities, also weapons, armours and accoutrements by artisans and artists expert in those lines, producing goods with an agreement to the amount of work, time allowed and wages, and should store them in places suitable for each. . . . And he should know them by their class, appearance, characteristics, quantity, sources, price and place of storing.⁴²

⁴² KA 2.18.1.

Then follows a long list of different types of weapons and types of gear for use in battle. The king's superintendent must know everything about the armoury, and he should know the work of the factories in which the weapons are produced, their manufacture, their expenditure, etc. (Thus, the state described by Kauṭilya would satisfy a basic criterion of a civilized society, according to the great 18th century historical vision of Edward Gibbon. Gibbon asserted that the central organization of arms is a characteristic of civilization and that 'barbarians' per definition insist on private ownership of weapons of war.)⁴³

The international system (for want of a better word) was analysed by Kauṭilya as an anarchic system, where the king must see himself in the middle of a circle (*maṇḍala*). The immediate neighbours are natural enemies (*ari*) and the neighbour's neighbour is a natural friend (*mitra*) because he is the enemy of the enemy.⁴⁴ The pattern of friends and enemies repeats itself in concentric circles and the king must always strive to dominate. Kauṭilya goes on and on giving details about the relationship between different elements of the circles according to their relative strength. In terms of foreign policy, the king is basically a conqueror in a system of alliances. According to Kauṭilya, this circle of constituent elements is the basis of the six measures of foreign policy (*śāḍgunya*). These six measures are peace (*saṁdhi*), war (*vigraha*), staying quiet (*āsana*), marching (*yāna*), seeking shelter (*saṁśraya*) and dual policy (*dvaiddhībhāva*), according to Kauṭilya.⁴⁵ The two important concepts for our concern is peace and war. The Sanskrit word translated by *war* here is *vigraha*. Kauṭilya is very careful to define concepts and make explicit the relationship between different related concepts. For instance, Kauṭilya defines three forms of power (*śakti*) connected firstly to knowledge, secondly to wealth and the army (*daṇḍa*) and, thirdly, to valour. The power deriving from wealth and the army is the power of might (*prabhūśakti*).⁴⁶ When he

⁴³ See discussion of Gibbon in Black 1998:8–10 and 206–7.

⁴⁴ KA 6.2.13–40.

⁴⁵ KA 7.1.2.

⁴⁶ KA 6.2.33.

comes to the concept of *vigraha* he writes: “Vigraha is doing injury.” (*apakāro vigraha*).⁴⁷ There is no morally relevant difference between peace and war for Kauṭilya. He writes that the king shall always try to destroy the livelihood and opportunities of his adversaries in the circle of kings. This may best be achieved through waging war or making peace. Peace is never treated as an end in itself by Kauṭilya. Peace is itself a means to achieving other ends:

If he were to see “Remaining at peace, I shall ruin the enemy’s undertakings by my own undertakings bearing abundant fruit . . . or by creating confidence by means of peace, I shall ruin the enemy’s undertakings by the employment of secret remedies and occult practices, . . .” he should secure advancement through peace.⁴⁸

The final sentence of the verse reads, “he should secure advancement through peace (*saṁdhinā vṛddhimātiṣṭet*),” and it reveals the cynical nature of Kauṭilya’s concept of peace. The same grammatical constructions are made with the other five means of policy when Kauṭilya says the king should secure advancement (*vṛddhi*) through their deployment. Thus, peace is not a goal, it is a means. The term *vigraha* and its cognates is mostly translated as *war*. But *vigraha* may be combined with the policy of staying quiet (*āsana*) to make for a situation where there is war without the use of weapons. We might call this some form of peaceful war where one carries out hostile policies against a competitor, preferably without the adversary recognizing it. We may note here that the tradition of statecraft related to Kauṭilya was transmitted throughout the Indian Middle Ages. If we look at the medieval Jaina writer Somadeva we get exactly the same ideas of what war really is about. “War with weapons (*śastrayudha*)” says Somadeva, “starts when other means of conquering the enemy are exhausted,” a view that is reminiscent of Clausewitz’ maxim that war is the continuation of politics by other means.⁴⁹ War is a means

⁴⁷ KA 7.1.7.

⁴⁸ KA 7.1.32.

⁴⁹ *Nītvākyaṁṛtam* 30.5.

to an end and should only be resorted to when it is absolutely necessary. "That which may be obtained by peaceful means should not be obtained by the means of war."⁵⁰ To sum up, in the tradition of statecraft we see an advanced tradition of thinking about the state and about its means of violence. Still, as I will explain in the next section, there was no ethically significant distinction between external and internal violence. There was no concept of war in the European sense.

Sovereignty, Daṇḍa and the External/Internal Distinction

I am arguing that the Hindu tradition of statecraft did not distinguish between the king's legitimate authority to use violence inside his realm and outside against other kings and their territories. Perhaps it could be argued that the distinction between internal and external violence did exist in practical terms; Kauṭilya's notions of politics is certainly sophisticated. For instance, Kauṭilya is careful to discuss the different types of punishment for different types of crimes and transgressions against the laws and the social order. However, the crucial point is that the difference between internal and external violence was one of degrees, it was not a fundamental difference. In order to understand this point we need to understand the notion of the kingdom and the sovereignty of the Hindu king.

Kingship is a central topic for the History of Religions as academic tradition and it is a point where the historical relevance of religion to the legitimation of war is obvious. Ronald Inden has warned against seeing a parallel between European and Indian ideas of divine kingship.⁵¹ The divinity of the king in India has nothing to do with divine right in a Christian sense. In Indian mythology, the cosmos and everything in it issues from the Cosmic Man and is not created *ex nihilo*. This means that the supreme Hindu God is always immanent, although transcendent in relation to society and nature. God is not outside as a bestower of kingly authority, as in Europe, we might

⁵⁰ Ibid. 30.27.

⁵¹ Inden 1998:46–47.

add. This is a non-dualistic cosmos, in which the king was the micro-cosmic figure of the Cosmic Man symbolising unity and order on the micro-level.⁵² This may be true of the Purāṇas and the epics. In Kauṭilya's thinking, however, themes that we treat as religious are mostly seen as instrumental. For instance, he should make his priests encourage the army by promising salvation and paradise after death:

His ministers and priest should encourage the army by saying thus: "It is declared in the Vedas that the goal which is reached by sacrificers, after performing the final ablutions, in sacrifices in which the priests have been duly paid for, is the very goal which brave men are destined to attain."⁵³

In other words, he should tell his men that dying on the battlefield is a shortcut to heavenly bliss.

The world views of Hindu India — reflected in cosmology, mythology, ritual, soteriology — are diverse but they do not allow for political theory akin to the theory of sovereignty that developed in late medieval and early modern Europe. At the foundation of the new distinction between external and internal affairs in Europe was the concept of sovereignty, which expressed the political autonomy of each European prince and his territory in relation to other princes. Clearly, the concept of sovereignty was still in the crucible in the late Middle Ages. However, in matters of war, Europe was moving towards a consensus on the principle that only a prince without secular superior had the right to levy war. This was in opposition to the feudal law, according to which it was the privilege of all gentlemen, including those with secular superiors, like Barons for instance, to settle disputes through the use of arms.⁵⁴ The borders between the territorial realms of the princes became sharp and only the prince without secular superior had legitimate authority in matters of public, external war, waged, at least in theory, for the sake of the common weal.

The easy way to read Kauṭilya's ideas about foreign policy is to analyse the elements as states and understand the term *vigraha* as war

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ KA 10.3.

⁵⁴ Keen 1965:72 and 78–79.

in the modern sense. However, it would be an anachronism to look at the elements in the circle as states in a European sense. In fact, the tendency to look at Indian political organization through the ages as akin to modern European states has been one of the obstacles to a real understanding of Indian political history.⁵⁵ Indian political scientists did not perceive the international system as a whole with autonomous states with kings of equal standing. There were clear notions about how a king should run his country and how he should behave towards other kings but there was no notion of sovereignty in the European sense. Kauṭilya talks about the territory and its people, i.e., the two elements constituting the kingdom (*janapada*). This is an entity without a clear shape and with fuzzy borders. The peoples living in the country regions between two kingdoms belong to *both* the king and his enemy. "Country people on the other hand are common to the enemy," Kauṭilya says.⁵⁶ It is very important to the king to use all means to secure the loyalty of groups and individuals who do not belong to either kingdom. But it is also his task to be constantly on the watch against individuals and groups within his realm that might conspire with the enemy to undermine his position.

The pre-modern Indian state is an amorphous one with fuzzy territorial borders. The power and influence of the kings in the international order described by Kauṭilya overlap and interpenetrate in ways that make it difficult or meaningless to distinguish between external and internal affairs. Indeed, Kauṭilya never makes this distinction nor do any of the later writers in this intellectual tradition. J.C. Heesterman insists that we must not think of the Indian state as a "clearly defined territorial state, internally coherent and closed to the outside."⁵⁷ Instead,

⁵⁵ This tendency has been apparent in research on all periods of Indian history from the Maurya empire to the Mughal empire. In the latter case, many scholars have assumed that the Mughal empire was a centralized and bureaucratic state because they wished to see the Mughal empire as a forerunner to the rational and systematized military and administrative framework of British India. This might be a gross distortion of the actual nature of the Mughal state. See Blake 1997.

⁵⁶ KA 8.1.27.

⁵⁷ Heesterman 1985:143.

he asserts, we must acknowledge the open-endedness of the state. The king's authority is of a ritual nature. Actual political power in the realm is dispersed and based on a network of personal relations rather than on residence on a defined territory.⁵⁸ B. Chattopadhyaya uses terms like 'fluid' and 'dynamic' to capture the nature of the Indian state.⁵⁹ The fundamentally different idea of sovereignty in India is significant in an exploration of the concept of war, as noted in a 1984 article by André Wink. Wink's view about the relationship between the external and internal politics is worth citing here because it matches our own:

In principle the stratagems to be employed by the king are the same in his own dominion and in that of his enemy. There is therefore no distinction of kind between "external" and "internal" politics.⁶⁰

The consequence, to return to the basic thesis of this article, was that the writers in the tradition of statecraft did not care to discuss legitimate authority in matters of war. These writers had something to say about *jus in bello* — although not much compared to the epic literature. However, they showed absolutely no concern for *jus ad bellum*.

In order to understand their ideas about the ethical underpinnings of violence we may turn for a moment to crucial concept of *daṇḍa*. *Daṇḍa* means several different things in different contexts. It can mean violence, it can mean punishment, it can refer to the army, or it refers to a specific personification of legitimate violence and in this sense is explicitly identified with the person of the king. In order to maintain order and to protect his people the king has *daṇḍa*, the rod of punishment. *Daṇḍa* is military power and *daṇḍa* is punishment. The execution of power is the "wielding of *daṇḍa*" (*daṇḍanīti*). The execution of power is the same both outside and inside the king's realm. In Indian ideology the rod that is the symbol of the king's physical power often becomes a symbol of the king himself:

The Rod is the King and the man, he is the inflicter and he is the chastiser, traditionally regarded as the guarantor for the duty of the four stages of life. The

⁵⁸ Heesterman 1985:143.

⁵⁹ Chattopadhyaya 1997:212.

⁶⁰ Wink 2001:112.

Rod alone chastises all subjects, the Rod protects them, the Rod stays awake while they sleep; wise men know that justice is the Rod. Properly wielded, with due consideration, it makes all the subjects happy; but inflicted without due consideration, it destroys everything. . . . Where the Rod moves about, black and with red eyes, destroying evil, there the subjects do not get confused, as long as the inflicter sees well.⁶¹

The ideology and mythology surrounding the concept of *danḍa* illustrate the fuzzy borders between the internal and external affairs of the Hindu state. In conclusion, an exploration of the concept of the state, of war and related ideas of the ethics of war found in the Arthaśāstra reveals that these are fundamentally different from the concepts developing in medieval and early modern Europe. Certainly, we have seen that Kauṭilya wrote about a society where the king is in charge of the means of violence and ideas of war are in fact highly advanced. However, the crucial point for my argument is that we can find no real and significant distinction between the violence directed against outward enemy societies and the violence directed against criminal and seditious elements within the king's own territory.

Conclusion

The point of departure for this article was the fact that many civilizations seem to take no interest in matters pertaining to aspects of the ethics of war treated under the *jus ad bellum* in the European tradition. This lack of concern is all the more puzzling when many of the relevant civilizations identify themselves with world religions that have complex and sophisticated traditions for ethics in other spheres of life. In matters of *jus in bello* there are much greater areas of convergence across cultures. For instance, most ethical traditions have plenty to say about matters concerning proportionality of means, which is one of main topics under the *jus in bello* of the European just war tradition. I have compared the basic concept of war in Europe as it developed in the formative period of the just war tradition — i.e., the 13th century — with concepts of war found in Hindu India. In the

⁶¹ *The Laws of Manu* 7.14, 17–19, and 25.

European case, I relied on the leading secondary sources, by writers like M. Keen, F. Russell and J.T. Johnson. In the case of India, I looked at the relevant primary material belonging to two very different literary traditions discussing war and violence and its restraint: the epic literature and the tradition of statecraft, or Arthaśāstra. There is a strong bias towards Europe in most academic debates about the history of war. It seemed to me that this bias is brought into the discussion of the comparative ethics of war when writers assume — like James Turner Johnson seemed to do — that the basic distinctions between external and internal, and between private and public, war in late medieval Europe is one instance of a more universal human tendency in thinking about the restraint of violence. I have tried to show that the distinctions between external and internal and between private and public war were not made in pre-modern India. In other words, there are basic conceptual differences between the European and Indian concepts of war. It is my contention here that these conceptual differences are at least part of the explanation why European writers were so concerned about *jus ad bellum* while Indian writers were not. In the classical Hindu world view, the legitimate authority of the king needs no defending or explanation. In the tradition of statecraft, war against another king is an extension of the proper use of violence to maintain order within the realm. The legitimate authority is self-evident in external affairs, as it is in internal affairs where it is part of the social contract where the king must maintain order and punish the evil. In the epic literature, war is never properly differentiated from the private duel between heroes. The distinction between *bellum* and *duellum*, which is so important to the just war tradition, is not made. Therefore, an Indian *jus ad bellum* comparable to the European tradition never existed.

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THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS ON VIOLENCE AND RELIGION: IDENTITY, POWER, PRIVILEGE AND DIFFERENCE (WITH REFERENCE TO THE HISPANIC WORLD)

FRANCISCO DIEZ DE VELASCO

Summary

The purpose of this paper is to reflect, from a theoretical point of view, on the relationship between violence and religion. The historic examples, taken mainly from the Hispanic world, aim to show that even if violence is an habitual component in religions, it is not at all a necessary combination, either in regards to religion in general or to any religion in particular. For this purpose, four aspects will be brought up in which the binomial religion-violence is manifested in a more characteristic way. The first has to do with identity: religion as a sign of identity can allow for a systematic and religiously correct resource for violence. The second aspect deals with the relationship between power and religion, in particular in its relation to the religious legitimization of power and the violence that goes along with its practice. The third aspect refers to privilege, generator of violence in a number of orders (between humans and animals, men and women, powerful and subjected, center and periphery, religious leaders and their followers, etc.). The last aspect refers to difference and introduces a reflection on multireligiosity, a characteristic of our present world, and in which the combination of religion and violence, even though it endures, tends to be mitigated in view of a global frame of cohabitation which must become stronger from the search for a consensus, necessarily based on the renunciation of religiocentric and ethnocentric stances.¹

To reflect on the violence-religion binomial proves to be a complex challenge, given that since 9/11 and its consequences, the studies attempting to fill in the eagerness for explanations, have multiplied.²

¹ This paper is a result of the Research Project "Metodologías en Historia de las Religiones" BHA 2003-01686 (FEDER/ Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia).

² The interest in the subject increased as a consequence of the unexpected success of the religious arguments in the Iranian revolution of 1979 and other islamist

These have generally been conducted by a mass media governed by the urgency of tight deadlines. In consequence, they tend to fall into the easy temptation of denying any logic to the violent acts harbored by religion by suggesting that they are incomprehensible: a mere abscess worthy only of disappearing.

Trying to find our bearings in a long-term panorama has the advantage of allowing us to measure outlooks and words and to compare explanations at a distance from the present urgency. It allows us to take a step back from approaches that seem continuously to search for the latest news, as if each moment were so different from the rest; as if history could no longer provide explanations (or had reached its end); and as if what is happening to us as citizens of post-industrial, post-colonial, and also post-communist societies held no comparison to, or basis in, the past.

In this paper, therefore, I will opt for intermingling past and present in order to try to prove that violence has been, throughout history, an argument systematically used in religious speeches and behaviors,³

and fundamentalist movements in Asia and Africa, showing that religion had become a new geostrategic factor to be taken into account. But September 11, 2001 (and in Spain March 11, 2004) changed the focus of the academic agendas (reality forcing scholars *à contre coeur* to engage with the stark reality of death and massive violence produced by terrorism); see, for example, in a work on cults, the felt necessity to write an "Islamic" prologue: D.G. Bromley and J.G. Melton, *Cults. Religion and Violence*, Cambridge: University Press 2002, xiii–xx; the reflections made in the new edition with an *ad hoc* preface by M. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, Berkeley: University of California Press 2001; or the pugnacity of B. Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*, Chicago: University Press 2003.

³ See C. Candland, *The Spirit of Violence: An Interdisciplinary Bibliography of Religion and Violence*, New York: H.F. Guggenheim Foundation 1992, or the compilation of the more recent publications, including terrorism and the 9/11 consequences, "Religion and Violence: a Bibliography" (http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/internet/hedgehog_vio_bib.htm), prepared by C.K. Bellinger (the author of *The Genealogy of Violence: Reflections on Creation, Freedom and Evil*, Oxford: University Press 2001). On the subject religion and violence, see G. ter Haar and J. Busuttil (eds.), *Bridge or Barrier: Religion and Violence*, Leiden: Brill 2004; M. Juergensmeyer

one that is not new (not even in its degree or the supposed lack of explicability).⁴ In order to arrange the wide array of possible angles on the subject religion-violence, I will present my reflections around four interconnected axes: identity, power, privilege and difference. Whenever possible or relevant, I will place them within the Hispanic territory, which will allow me to be concrete and not divert my attention towards overly theoretical paths. The Hispanic case displays certain characteristics that can let it serve as a prototype. The governing regime in the Iberian Peninsula established, from the end of the fifteenth century, a model of ideological standardization which used religion as an axis and which generated a notable degree of violence. This model, with its fluctuations, lasted until such a recent date as the end of the 1960s, and the speed with which it was abandoned is very interesting for the purpose of extrapolating the possible rhythms of the ideological and religious dynamic in general. Before the sixteenth century, however, the Spanish territory was an area of miscegenation, a territory of boundaries between different cultural models based on different religions that had become related in antagonistic as well as non-violent ways. Today, this type of frontier situation is becoming more and more evident and leads us to think about the dynamic between globalization and local cultures, between migrations and identities, and about the role that religion can fulfill as a vehicle for differences.

(ed.), *Violence and the Sacred in the Modern World*, London: Frank Cass 1992; R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation*, New York: Rowman and Littlefield 2000; G. Filoramo, *Che cos'è la religione*, Torino: Einaudi 2004, 277ff.

⁴ See A. Blok, "The Enigma of Senseless Violence," in G. Aijmer and J. Abbink (eds.), *Meanings of Violence: A Cross Cultural Perspective*, Oxford: Berg 2000, 23–38. In the scheme of the risk society proposed by U. Beck, *World Risk Society*, Cambridge: Polity Press-Blackwell 1999; *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, London: Sage 1992, 9/11 religion appears as a new source of risk and is not to be thought of only as a pre-modern, negligible factor. For Beck's position post 9/11 see U. Beck, *Das Schweigen der Wörter*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 2002.

Identity and Violence

From a general point of view, religion is perceived as an important mark of identity, both individually and collectively, around which ethnicity and universality, distinction and resemblance can converge. These identitarian values can perhaps partially explain how religions themselves are able to endure in our present world by offering points of reference for prestige, especially in situations of uncertainty or anxiety. At the same time religions can provide ways of singling out as different those who are considered not to be included in the criteria defining the identity. In this way violence and religion can combine so as to generate a strong and secure reference point while at the same time discriminating “the others” and justifying the use of violence.⁵ Being an area with strong essentialist tendencies, binary thinking finds in religion a privileged locus of manifestation. Religion, therefore, can exacerbate the violent act by introducing pretexts to multiply and strengthen conflicts, reinforcing the radicalism of arguments that in other circumstances would not go so far. For example, the terrorist suicide is sanctioned thanks to the religious ingredient, in a paroxysm of religious identity capable of canceling out one’s individual identity, symbolized in self-immolation.

In addition, we have to take into account an important factor in today’s global ideology. There is nowadays a high tolerance threshold towards religion-based arguments, considering that the leading power, the United States, is a country which, despite the radical legal separation between religion and government for more than two centuries, values religion. In the global context of American cultural, ide-

⁵ Reflections on identity and violence have been a valuable development in anthropological thought; see P.J. Steward and A. Strathern, *Violence: Theory and Ethnography*, New York: Continuum 2002; B.E. Schmidt and I.W. Schröder (eds.), *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict*, London-New York: Routledge 2001, ch. 2; D. Riches (ed.), *The Anthropology of Violence*, Oxford: Blackwell 1986, ch. 1; or the volumes edited by F. Héritier (*De la violence*, Paris: Odile Jacob 1996; *De la violence II*, Paris: Odile Jacob 1999).

ological and symbolic pre-eminence, the disagreements that can find protection in religion are incomparably greater than those that would be tolerated without the religious added value. In fact, identities based on religion possess greater legitimacy today than they may have had a few decades ago, when in the large part of the world that followed the Communist ideology the tolerance threshold towards religious arguments was minimal. Hence, religion has proved, and continues to prove, to be a noteworthy instrument of behavioral manipulation and implementation of differences. Thus the paradigm of violence, the infringement of the Golden Rule (based on the respect for the other that a large number of religions, and particularly the Universalistic ones, preach), is easy to justify if it leans precisely on religion: the moral norm softens and holy violence is rewarded rather than punished. A religious construction of identity and otherness can turn the different into a scapegoat, whose disappearance or annihilation is considered the solution to the problem. In strongly identitarian religions, such as the civic or national ones,⁶ we find institutionalized rites of expulsion that consolidate (by means of rendering “other” and de-identifying a member, human or animal) a social consensus through the use of collective violence. Among the Greeks, a person could be ritually mistreated, expelled, and at times abused to death, and was called *pharmakós*, the “remedy” for past, present and future evils. The ceremonies were triggered when hunger, sickness or some problem hovered over the community, and offered the ritual solution for recovering a sacred balance in the form of a purification ritual.⁷

This game of violence and de-identification has taken place in many religious contexts, and the Hispanic world provides some good examples. The anti-Jewish persecutions, from the Visigothic period in the

⁶ See the general scheme of F. Diez de Velasco, *Introducción a la historia de las religiones*, 3rd ed., Madrid: Trotta 2002, 219ff.

⁷ Which we can analyze, for example, as a process of community consensus: see the reflections in F. Diez de Velasco, “El miedo y la religión: reflexiones teóricas y metodológicas,” in F. Diez de Velasco (ed.), *Miedo y religión*, Madrid: Ediciones del Orto 2002, 376ff.

sixth century to the end of the fifteenth, show this interplay between identity and otherness. They detonated in different circumstances, but many of them coincided with periods of scarcity, hunger or wars, although the specific excuses for violence show the characteristics of a common prototype. By means of a de-identifying alchemy repeated ad nauseam, the Jewish neighbor became the cause of all evils, was denounced as a god-killer, and was therefore marked by the substance of an otherness that must be pulled by its roots. What is noteworthy in the Hispanic case is that the Jews, as if they were scapegoats, were finally expelled from the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon in 1492, from Navarre in 1498, and forced to a compulsory conversion in Portugal in 1497. Expulsion or re-identification with the Catholic majority was the choice that was offered to the Sephardis. This was nothing new since such things had already taken place in other countries such as England and France. But what was truly noteworthy in the Hispanic example was that the Jews were never allowed to return: a Hispanic identity was cultivated for centuries, even until the 1978 Constitution (although with some more relaxed moments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries during the periods of more liberal governments), an identity that denied differences and used religion as a criterion for homogenization and applied violence to enforce it. At the same time as Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon, the so-called Catholic kings, expelled the Jews and took full dominion of the territories previously under Muslim rule, the Inquisition was established in 1478 under the direct orders of the king, and no longer, as in other places and periods, under papal mandate. It became a subsidiary instrument of ideological control which sustained itself on a Spanish identity that did not accept, with regard to religion, any symbols of identity other than Catholic. With a systematic use of violence⁸ it confronted both the Protestant reform and the diverse worlds

⁸ See, for example, J.P. Duviols and A. Molinié-Bertrand, *La violence en Espagne et en Amérique (XV–XIX^e siècles)* (Iberica n.s. 9), Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris-Sorbonne 1997, 197–216; the Inquisition has been subjected to ideological *parti*

that opened up with the penetration into colonial territories, especially in America. It is precisely the strong sense of identity provided by Catholicism that is able to explain the certainty with which the American conquest was carried out and the lack of scruples with regard to its consequences. Endowed with a strongly religiocentric mentality, the Spanish conquerors believed (or claimed to believe) to be redeeming the non-Catholics and to be entitled to subject them and force them to convert. If the conversion was not total and if groups have survived in Hispanic America that are little Christianized or not at all, it was the result of the incapability of the domination technologies and the efficacy of the mechanisms of indigenous cultural resistance, and not of the lack of will to carry it out. The Canary Islands, conquered at the same time as Hispanic dominion was established over America, offer an example of this. Because of the limited territory, the islands were completely Christianized, leaving no trace of pre-Christian beliefs or an indigenous population not submitted to *métissage*.

The role of the Inquisition was notable in this process of homogenization⁹ and in the always present and latent possibility of alterization of one part of the population: the unmasking of the so-deemed “bad Catholics.” The *auto-de-fe* began to become a ceremony comparable to the *pharmakós* ritual. It was the channel for massive violence in the form of public rituals that served to consolidate identity and social consensus. It was a form of violence that was perfectly acceptable because it used an institutionalized vehicle of a religious nature and served the purpose of domesticating social aggression by offering what Girard called spare victims.¹⁰ Due to their vulnerability, these victims served

pris: an interesting study of the confused mixture of the denied and the desired in scholarship is given by D. Moreno, *La invención de la inquisición*, Madrid: Marcial Pons-Fundación Carolina 2004.

⁹ It was also an easy resource as a political weapon, as is exemplified in the case of Philip the Second’s secretary, Antonio Pérez: since the king could not capture him by ordinary legal means, he managed to have him accused of heresy by the Inquisition.

¹⁰ See the analysis of R. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins

as actors in a multifunctional symbolic performance. It permitted the consolidation of faith through the practice of religiously sanctioned violence on the part of the authorities. But it also satisfied the individual needs for violence against the other.¹¹ The strong Hispanic religious identity maintained by the Inquisition lasted even beyond the disappearance of that institution, which took place in Spain as late as 1834. Hence, while a dissociation of the national identity from specific religious options was sanctioned by the constitutions of the United States and France during the last decades of the eighteenth century, the first Spanish constitutions were distinguished by a strong assertion of the Catholic identity of Spain. The first Spanish constitution, approved in 1812 in Cadiz, categorically defended the exclusively Catholic identity of Spain.¹² This strongly identitarian stance was maintained, with some periods of greater tolerance, or even of failed attempts to dissociate religion and politics, until 1967, when the first law guaranteeing religious freedom was adopted.

A situation of such tight identification between Catholicism and Spanish national identity could not fail to generate violence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries even if the Inquisition could no

University Press 1977, esp. ch. 1; idem, *The Scapegoat*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1986, ch. 4; also, I. Strenski, *Theology and the First Theory of Sacrifice*, Leiden: Brill 2003, esp. 60ff.

¹¹ In our societies, dominated by the mass media, such needs can also be satisfied through television (see L. Kurtz [ed.], *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict*, San Diego: Academic Press 1999, s.v. "Television, Programming and Violence"), or through cinema violence, capable of envisioning innumerable forms of alienness, especially in the experimentation of science fiction. In societies that are less attached to technology, the same may be achieved by means of public corporal punishment and executions, which are easier to accept if, as in Saudi Arabia, they are done in the name of the *shari'a*.

¹² Article 12 of the first Spanish constitution expresses the idea in emphatic terms: "La religión de la Nación española es y será perpetuamente la católica, apostólica, romana, única verdadera. La Nación la protege con leyes sabias y justas y prohíbe el ejercicio de cualquier otra." (The religion of the Spanish Nation is now and perpetually the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman, the only true religion. The Nation protects it with wise and just laws and forbids the exercise of any other.)

longer be relied on as an instrument of repression. At first, violence was directed against non-Catholics, who were persecuted on multiple occasions (even quite recently) for trespassing the restrictions of private cult and for making themselves publicly visible. But faced with the great conflicts where the national identity was called into question, whether in the confrontation with the Napoleonic forces or during the Carlist¹³ civil wars, many members of the Catholic Church opted for violence. The paroxysm of such violence was the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), which was understood as a crusade for National-Catholicism, the official ideology of Franco's system.¹⁴ Once victorious, the Franquists were able to convert this anti-modern convergence of politics and religion (in many aspects comparable to some Islamist fundamentalisms that asserted themselves in the last decades) into an official ideological model, which was established in a forceful way by means of the execution, imprisonment, repression, or expulsion of those who thought differently.¹⁵ It sought new scapegoats, creating a terrible imaginary enemy, based, in addition to political criteria, on

¹³ The Carlists, defenders of an absolutist, agrarian, anti-industrial, anti-modern, ultra-Catholic and millennialist model in the style of the French royalists, found resonance with members of the clergy, some of whom turned out to be bloodthirsty military leaders at the same time as spiritual ones.

¹⁴ For Spanish National-Catholicism, see J.J. Linz "Church and State in Spain from the Civil War to the Return of Democracy," *Daedalus* 120 (1991) 159–78; W.J. Callahan, *The Catholic Church in Spain (1875–1998)*, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press 2000, esp. ch. 14–16; F. Lanon, *Privilege, Prosecution and Prophecy: The Catholic Church in Spain (1875–1975)*, Oxford: Clarendon 1987, 224ff. For a valuable comparison with Portugal, see P.C. Manuel, "Religion and Politics in Iberia: Clericalism, Anticlericalism and Democratization in Portugal and Spain," in T.G. Jelen and W.C. Wilcox, *Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge: University Press 2002, ch. 4.

¹⁵ Franco's regime was based on the systematic use of violence legitimated by a *sui generis* judicial system and made references to religion, crusade and even inquisition (as a model of justice prototypical of the "essences of the Spanish"): see J. Casanova *et al.*, *Morir, matar, sobrevivir: La violencia en la dictadura de Franco*, Barcelona: Crítica 2002, 10ff.; also J. Casanova, *La iglesia de Franco*, Madrid: Temas de Hoy 2001.

religious ones; for example, the imaginary Judeo-Masonic conspiracy. The only logical consequence had to be the expulsion of the enemy who symbolized otherness in this struggle, believed to be eternal, between good and evil, and between Spain and the “anti España” (the “anti-Spain,” an essentialist adaptation of the *Volksgeist* concept).

For building a Spanish national identity of monolithic character, another great enemy was separatism: the articulation of national identities based on cultural and linguistic singularities, manifested since the nineteenth century in industrialized areas of Spain such as Catalonia or the Basque country. But contrary to what has happened in other areas (for example, in Ulster or in the former Yugoslavia), the differential Catalan or Basque identity was not based on a different religious choice. This is why, when the clash of identities generated violence, as for example in the Basque conflict, it was not characterized by the rancor of those conflicts that use religion as a vehicle, as is the case, for example, in Islamist terrorism.

But the progressive opening to difference that characterizes the models of cohabitation of industrial and post-industrial societies, with the emergence of complex, multiple identities,¹⁶ both local and global, does not prevent the emergence of certain problems which can lead to combining religion with violence. For example, the debate over the reference to Christian roots in the European Constitution is symptomatic of an identitarian approach to the issue on the part of some groups. Such a reference can be interpreted as a code of exclusion, especially in a region like Europe, where cultural and religious diversity is more and more evident as regards national minorities. This means that the inclusion of countries with an Islamic tradition into the European community could generate more serious problems.

¹⁶ Masterly exposed in the easy to read but thought-provoking essay of A. Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, London: Penguin Books 2003.

Power and Violence

The interdependence of religion and power is another of the aspects that can provide some clues to the comprehension of the subject at hand. Power in stratified societies (those that arise with the economic, social and ideological complexities produced together with the development of agriculture) requires violence for its subsistence and mechanisms to justify its use.¹⁷ Religion has been a key in the legitimization of power: in the acceptance of inequalities, in how leadership was established and endured, and in maintaining a social consensus in spite of the unequal distribution of privileges. In fact, social systems have arisen in which power and religion were indissolubly unified, such as theocracies and hierocracies. It is commonly suggested that the added value that provides an understanding of the influence of religion in many societies and periods is that religion has offered much less costly and more consensual formulas of dominion than overt violence resulting from military control. Although the control mechanisms that are based on religion do not exclude the use of violence as a subsidiary means of power, it is usually suggested that violence is not its principal means of expression. Generally, the religious legitimization harbored in complex theologies, in the exploitation of performative and cohesive values through ceremonies, and in signs of identity driven by beliefs, seems to channel or to mitigate violence. But we cannot forget that on many occasions religion unambiguously legitimates violence. An example is the religious sanction of war, aggression or violence even between contenders belonging to the same religion, and even more between enemies of different religions; or the use, which still persists today, of religious specialists serving in the lines of military troops.

¹⁷ G. Benavides "Religious Articulations of Power," in G. Benavides and M.W. Daly (eds.), *Religion and Political Power*, Albany: SUNY Press 1989, 1–12; for a summary of the critical issues involved on the issue of stratification, see G. Benavides, "Stratification," in W. Braun and R.T. McCutcheon (eds.), *Guide to the Study of Religion*, London-New York: Cassell 2000, ch. 21.

Violence in the form of coercion justified by religion has been progressively mitigated, and the legitimization of power in industrial and post-industrial societies is no longer principally harbored in religion. Yet, there remain in even this type of societies identitarian, political, and authoritarian spheres in which religious influence is palpable. This is exemplified by the phenomenon of so-called civil or public religion, as well as by the role of increasingly transnational religious lobbies. If this is the situation in post-industrial societies such as in America and Europe, it is not surprising that religion continues to play an important role for the legitimization of power in societies where traditional agricultural models of understanding the world are still dominant, or that it has even increased its importance compared to the past, as is exemplified in the case of Iran. As has been said already, religion is a prestigious domain in the contemporary world. Hence, it should not seem strange that groups who wish to attain power (or who confront it in a violent way) successfully use religious language; the religious cover earns them a legitimization and a social support they would not enjoy if they restricted themselves to a purely political type of discourse. Furthermore, the exercise of power, once reached, is in some cases easier under the protection of religious legitimacy.

An example of the above can be found in Spain, as industrialization coincided with an opening towards religious diversity between 1868 and 1936. Most of all, this was evident in the period of the Second Spanish Republic (1931–1936), when a separation between religion and political power was sought. At the heart of the new secular state was the 1931 Constitution, which abandoned the legitimizing power of Catholicism. But this juridical change took place in a context of strong violence that mixed political arguments (at the peak of fascisms and Stalinism) with religious ones. Anti-clericalism, which had been previously manifested in a sporadic way, proliferated, generating a series of aggressions towards members of the clergy and the burning down of churches. This provided arguments for the radicalization of the positions of many Catholics and of a large part of the ecclesiastic hierarchy, who chose to support the movement that resulted

in the Franco system.¹⁸ From 1936 on, and even clearer after Franco's victory in 1939, the new political regime made the Catholic religion into a central sign of identity. It was placed in an ideological model marked by the traditional values of agricultural society and was propagated, moreover, in a context where the civil war and its consequences had deteriorated the industrial fabric. In this political and religious entente, the role of the Catholic Church became essential: it sanctioned the laws of the state, which had to adapt to Catholic morality; power was legitimated as the will of God, which had been manifested in the victorious outcome of a war that qualified as a crusade (principally against atheism). In contrast to the comparable Italian and German regimes of that period, Franco's National-Catholicism was characterized by the importance of the religious sanction of power, which let the members of the high clergy be represented in the pseudo-parliamentary political organ of the regime (the Cortes). The Catholic Church had strong control over education, courses in the Catholic religion being obligatory at all educational levels, including the university. It censored publications, the press and entertainment, and had the exclusive right to sanction marriage (the law of divorce, in force during the Republican period, was abolished). In some ways, Franco's ideological model shows notable similarities with the fundamentalist or para-fundamentalist models of some present Muslim countries that apply religious law as the civil law of the state, imposed on all the citizens and not only those who profess the official religion. For the authorities of Franco's regime, Catholicism offered formulas of ideological dominion which, being anchored in tradition, counted on the strength of inertia for its social acceptance.

¹⁸ The anticlerical violence in Spain poured out a stream of horror in the first weeks of the civil war (1936) with hundred of priests, nuns and monks killed, a sort of victims of substitution in a political violence that used religion as a scapegoat: see J. Caro Baroja, *Introducción a una historia contemporánea del anticlericalismo español*, Madrid: Istmo 1980, or E. La Parra and M. Suárez (eds.), *El anticlericalismo español contemporáneo*, Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva 1998.

Among the many aspects of religious violence in Franco's Spain, the one carried out against those who did not profess the Catholic faith is exemplary. Until the year 1967 non-Catholics could not worship publicly, and private worship was severely limited. National-Catholicism, by claiming that the official religion was the only true one, defined members of other Christian groups and of other religions as suspect of carrying out illicit or criminal activities.

The key position given to the Catholic Church, and which derived from the legitimacy it gave to the Franco's regime, was redefined following the big changes introduced by the Second Vatican Council and by the new legal democratic framework. Today, Spain has no official religion and the treatment of religion in the constitution of 1978 is not very different from the majority of the European countries (even though it reflects the privileged character of Catholicism). But a suspicious attitude remains even today among some Catholic leaders and active members of the Church towards the motives and goals of members of other religions or towards other ways of understanding Christianity; this is particularly evident with regard to the more aggressive proselytizing groups. It is even claimed that Catholicism should have a clearly privileged position in distinction to other religious groups (a position which is not unconnected with the attempts of the Spanish Catholic lobby to put pressure on the European Constitution to reflect the Christian identity of Europe). This claim of privilege takes us to another of the areas of analysis of violence and religion that must be dealt with in some detail.

Privilege and Violence

Privilege generates violence in two directions: the violence exerted by the privileged and the violence exerted by those who are not privileged and who desire to become so or who respond to the violence exerted by the former.

The first relationship to be considered is the privilege of human beings over animals, including the violence of sacrifice. Human beings place themselves in a position in which they are legitimate killers,

either as hunters or as performers of sacrifice, whether by having an imaginary permission from the protective spirits of animals or a symbolic right to make an offering that will please the gods. Unless the animal is completely destroyed, which is not often the case, the sacrifice is, however, usually followed by the sharing of the animal remains. Even though the gods are the recipients of the offering, the edible parts (as exemplified in the Greek myth about Prometheus' deception) are given to the human participants. By this process of symbolic inversion, religious violence results in humans consuming collectively what in many cultures is an exceptional component of the diet — one that can be consumed only if religion has sanctioned the death of the animal. The sacrificial rite is generally followed by a celebration: social cohesion is strengthened around food, and the identity of those who have a place in the feast is symbolized. At the same time, the animal sacrifice provides a model for the acceptable shedding of blood, confirming the privileged status of gods in regard to humans and animals, but also affirming a hierarchical position of human privilege over the animal transformed into a victim. In fact, this hierarchy can be extrapolated so as to produce a further gradation between humans, thus establishing other types of privileges. Regarding bloody sacrifices we must also take into consideration the somewhat exceptional type of sacrifice in which the human being takes the place of the animal and is subjected to the violence of death. Whether the victim is selected because of its special value, as in the almost mythological Indian *purushamedha* in which a brahman or a *kshatriya* must die; or the sacrifice is believed to be the highest means of purification, as in the Greek *pharmakós* ritual mentioned above, and in the burning of heretics by the Inquisition; or the sacrifice is used as the symbolic axis of an unstoppable aggression that makes up a form of world order, as conceived by the Aztecs — the sacrifice of a human being constitutes an extreme form of religious violence.¹⁹ Analyzing as human sacrifice

¹⁹ See A. Brelich, *Presupposti del sacrificio umano*, Roma: Ed. dell'Ateneo 1967, for a general theory of human sacrifice. The Aztec human sacrifice is remarkable

indiscriminate terrorist attacks such as those carried out in New York or Madrid can prove instructive, for, ultimately, these attacks exemplify the privileged status of the killers, imbued with the certainty of the support of their faith with regard to their victims, who are de-identified, “animalized,” and slaughtered.

A second area of violence is the one shown by the privilege of gender, a structural violence that justifies the subordinate position of women. This can be based either on religious accounts that defend the precedence of males, or on rituals of segregation and subordination. Such violence is present even in societies in which special care is taken to deactivate the mechanisms that create gender inequalities, but in which the privilege of males is still maintained in the religious sphere. Examples of this can be found in the exercise of religious leadership in the Catholic, Orthodox Judaic and Islamic faiths and in that of full monastic consecration, as in Theravada Buddhism. Such violence can even result in death, as in the Indian *sati* ritual, the funeral sacrifice in which the wife must accompany her husband, joining him on his death journey (but never the other way around). This last example demonstrates that the subtlety of the dominance and persuasion mechanisms used on women, achieved by demanding the fulfillment of religious tradition and by adorning mythological accounts (and by the polysemy of the concept of *dharma*),²⁰ can result in the renouncement of life. In various parts of the world, such structurally gendered violence leads to women not being allowed to engage in activities considered to be masculine, the best-known cases being

because of the cannibalistic implications of some rituals: see Y. González Torres, *El sacrificio humano entre los Mexicanos*, México: Fondo de Cultura Económica 1985, esp. 282–95; for the ritual cannibalism among the Mayan culture: M.I. Nájera, *El don de la sangre en el equilibrio cósmico: El sacrificio y el autosacrificio sangriento entre los antiguos mayas*, México: UNAM 1987, esp. 206–14.

²⁰ The sacrifice of the goddess Sati was used as a prototype of the ritual constituting an ideal behavioral pattern according to the specific *dharma* of the woman, as noted by G. Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*, Cambridge: University Press 1996, 66; see the valuable study of J.S. Hawley (ed.), *Sati, the Blessing and the Curse: The Burning of Wives in India*, Oxford: University Press 1994.

found in certain Islamic countries. To varying degrees, this exemplifies the privilege of male over female typical of societies in which the desire for unrestrained population growth (a characteristic of expanding agricultural communities) requires a segregation of roles in order to ensure the women's devotion to reproduction, something that may be achieved by reinforcing the symbolic values of motherhood based on religion.²¹ Along the same lines, religions that have emerged from expanding agricultural societies emphatically justify the repression of sexual options other than the heterosexual one, resorting to the violence of condemnation, prohibition or repression.²²

A third component of religious privilege is that of age. This form of privilege, attested in many social groups, can take the form of a subjugation sanctioned by religion acting as the vehicle of tradition. This includes violence by adults towards children and adolescents and, occasionally, by the oldest members towards younger ones. Such privilege is particularly important in so-called age class societies, in which the key to personal status lies in the fulfillment of a series of rites of passage. Rituals are thus essential for the identity and perception of the group and can show its most violent face in rituals of intensification such as initiation rites. The list of humiliations, mutilations, and aggressions that may be inflicted on those being initiated is very long,²³ and can be used as a good criterion to evaluate the

²¹ See the analysis proposed in F. Diez de Velasco, *Introducción a la historia de las religiones*, 601ff.

²² Nevertheless, a wide range of religions offer excellent examples of attitudes that are neither repressive nor violent against different sexual options, as well as positions that provide much less support for the masculine privileges than those that we have just seen; for example, the exposition in R.C. Trexler, *Sex and Conquest: Gendered Violence, Political Order and the European Conquest of the Americas*, Cambridge: Polity Press 1995, esp. ch. 5, on the clash of models of masculinity between non-Europeans and Europeans in America.

²³ See the massive amount of information included in the Human Relations Area Files database (under the Outline of Cultural Materials, subject code 881, puberty and initiation); or the general reflections in M. Bloch, *Prey into Hunter: The Politics of Religious Experience*, Cambridge: University Press 1992 (the French edition has a more telling title: *La violence du religieux*, Paris: Odile Jacob 1997).

amount of violence acceptable to each society. With religion being one of the areas in which acceptable social behavior is reflected, the degree of violence displayed in the initiation rites may be correlated with the violence exerted in social practice. In this case, violence can be understood as a powerful means of making the initiation rite into a peak experience that, by breaking down the modes of perception and creating a new personality in a new position within the group, reinforces the value of membership and, hence, of social cohesion.

A fourth area of privilege is that of number, whereby groups are classified into majorities and minorities and which can have very significant effects. An illustration of this can be found in the Hispanic area: between the eighth and the thirteenth centuries, the position of privilege of Muslim majorities and Christian minorities was reversed on several occasions, which led to important consequences in terms of the violence suffered by the minorities. The majority groups tend to claim a privilege on the basis of being in possession of the keys to the symbolic capital of the society at large. The minorities may feel inclined to respond in a way that reinforces their belief of being "the chosen ones." Such a process of identity reinforcement of the minority can take violent forms. In Western countries, the conversion to fundamentalism of Muslim immigrants who were not particularly religious in their countries of origin, may be partly explained by this majority-minority dynamic. The shock of being a minority in the newly adopted country may lead to violence as an escape from this contradictory position. Similarly, the violence of millennialist and messianic groups may be explained as a result of dissatisfaction with the status of minority. Extremely violent actions such as those of the Aum Shinrikyô or the followers of Heaven's Gate may be partly analyzed in this perspective. In all these cases we find differences (cognitive discords or contradictions) between the majority and the minority in regard to the perception of privilege. However, the usual direction of violence channeled by religious arguments goes from the majority towards the minority, a good example being the persecutions of Jews or Sikhs. Furthermore, the minority generally tends to increase its own expressions of identity and to break the social ties with the major-

ity rather than to use overt violence. The minority can defend its identity and avoid being assimilated by the majority by means of endogamy or the refusal to share meals with outsiders. This, however, may exacerbate a social change in the minority group and give the majority an excuse to resort to violence. A manifest tendency of communities in the past to seal themselves off with religious arguments, and by practicing segregation in various forms (education, living space, relationships, etc.), is still alive today, particularly in India, but also in the United States. In times of crisis, such practices may provide an additional factor favoring violence between majorities and minorities.

One aspect of privilege has to do with the exercise of leadership and its religious foundation. The rituals of sovereignty may display a sublimation of tyrannical power that uses religion to attain an inversion of meanings. Thus, the violence that is inherent in political power can be considered a practical application on Earth of the Cosmic Order established by the gods. Just like the gods, the sovereigns are fearsome lords who punish, their reasons not being questioned; moreover, the violence they exert is not regarded as such but as a just and necessary maneuver of equilibrium. Just like the kings, the gods demand to be feared, for they are the lords of hosts, of victories, of violence. As figures of power, monarchs have domains of expression that can be copied from those who most appropriately symbolize legitimate inequality: the figure of the father, of the ancestor, of the god. However, not all societies have opted for a model of pyramidal leadership, where the symbolic resources are concentrated around the figure of a monarchs endowed with supernatural characteristics, a pattern so clearly illustrated by the early civilizations. In more horizontal social models, leadership may be more diluted and may sometimes require more complex mechanisms of consensus; but we must not forget that the privilege of dominant groups and the possibility of using violence through religious pretexts remains, although the exertion of privilege may not reach the levels of arbitrariness found in pyramidal social structures. Nevertheless there is both models a form of violence that originates from the privilege of the elite, i.e., where inequality emerges from the assignation of status. On the other hand,

we also have to take into account small-scale societies based on the acquisition of status, in which inequality and privilege are transmitted through gender, age, or position in the parental structure and other areas. These privileges also generate a violence justified by religion, channeled through ritual as in the examples of initiation rites mentioned above.

The highest degree of privilege of a human being over another is the institution of slavery, present in many societies and justified by a wide range of religious arguments. The discussion on whether the inhabitants of the New World were humans was at the time a noteworthy subject of debate, in which religion was in favor of both sides, and the enslavement and exploitation of the native Americans lay behind the opposing interests that were expressed in those religious terms. The development of models mixing racism, religion, and science in the United States in the years before the War of Secession is representative of this attitude. Black people were portrayed as a different species from whites and were, therefore, not included in the Christian fraternity as descendants from Adam and Eve.

Occasionally, religion provides the means for an elitist specialization of the religious privilege of the violent act. Groups of sacred warriors have existed in very different societies, from the Aztecs to China and Japan, from the Templars to the *Hashishin*; but perhaps the most systematized model for such communities is found in Vedic India, where the caste of the *kshatriya* held the theoretical privilege of the violent act, the act of inflicting death in a social acceptable way.²⁴

²⁴ The analysis of the Indian *rakshasa* marriage (based on the kidnapping of the bride and being prototypical for the *kshatriya*, the warrior caste) proposed by G. Dumézil, *Mariages indoeuropéens*, Paris: Payot 1979, 31–45, seems an excellent example of the structural use of violence in Indo-European culture (embodied and symbolized in the group of the warriors); for a more general survey see also G. Dumézil, *Heur et malheur du guerrier: Aspects mythiques de la fonction guerrière chez les Indo-européens*, 2nd ed., Paris: Flammarion 1985. It is also interesting to note the religious background of the training (mental and physical) in a number of warrior communities attested in societies all over the world.

As regards the elite, I would like to point out a type of privilege based on origin which appears especially clearly in colonial or para-colonial structures of dominance. The subordination of the periphery to the center implies at the same time the religious pre-eminence of the center and its representatives. The Spanish and Portuguese empires offer good examples of such privilege, given to priests and missionaries coming from the metropolis. The religion they displayed was another means of manifesting the center's dominance over the periphery, a dominance that became increasingly violent as the demand to abandon non-Christian forms of faith became stronger. This privilege of origin can be seen in the majority of missions resulting from religious expansion, from Sanghamitta and Mahinda in Sri Lanka to Francisco Javier in India; from the multitudes of Christian missionaries in Portuguese, French, and English colonial territories to the members of Muslim Sufi brotherhoods in sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia. In today's post-colonial world, such center-periphery relationships still exist, although the respective parameters may now be found in different places. Hence, we find this type of privilege being accorded to Arab imams, economically backed by Saudi Arabia, across the Islamic world, or in countries with Muslim minorities; to North American missionaries (be they Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, or other several evangelic groups across the Third World); or, even today, to Spanish Catholic missionaries in Latin America. They sometimes put forward an interpretation of religion that, being foreign, creates conflict and may result in violence based on difference. The colonial pressure sanctioned by religion, used as a weapon of ideological mutation, has not only succeeded in generating conversions, but also, at times, in generating violent responses such as revitalization movements of a messianic or millennialist nature. The situation of Judaism in the last stages of the Hellenistic Period and the impact of the Roman Empire (the context of the appearance of Christianity) are representative of this type of situation.²⁵

²⁵ For example the "War Scroll" from Qumran, documenting the desire for a violent

In addition to institutionalized violence, legitimated by bureaucratic religious authorities, charismatic leadership also provides representative cases of massive violence. It originates in the privilege of religious interpretation held by the leader, the sole person whose word is deemed indisputable. Despite the sensationalism and the religious-centric motives of some of the literature that deals with these issues, it is a fact that a very high level of tolerance of violence exists among certain minority groups, leading, in some cases, to mass suicides. This was the case with the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God, or with the People's Temple of Reverend Jim Jones.

Religious violence is not always physical; the fear of witchcraft in a wide range of different societies is an example of this. In these situations, there is a fear of a particular person with imaginary powers that can set off a supernatural aggression, but who may also be the object of counter-violence, this time a physical one, by those who feel attacked. The examples from Africa and Oceania are well-known.²⁶ Nor must we forget the pre-modern witch-hunts in Europe and the United States, which had a special preference for punishing women. Religion and gendered violence converge once again, limiting the portion of symbolic capital that women in these communities could have by violently punishing those who, even marginally, dared to approach the domains of privilege that were exclusive to men.

Another privilege of an elitist kind is that of sanctity, whether ascetic or based on martyrdom. Self-aggression and suffering are two important ingredients in many ascetic practices. The symbolical strength of the privilege of martyrdom is a significant factor to be taken into

religious resolution of the struggle between Good and Evil, imagined as the battle of two armies, the Sons of Light against the followers of Belial, the Prince of Darkness: see F. García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, 2nd ed., Leiden: Brill 1996, 95ff.

²⁶ See, for example P.J. Steward and A. Strathern, *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors, and Gossip*, Cambridge: University Press 2004 (esp. ch. 7).

account when trying to understand acts such as the 9/11 attacks in New York. To sacrifice oneself is to be part of an elite, even if the violence that leads to martyrdom is, in the peculiar symbolical inversion created by the language of Islamist terrorism, simultaneously produced and suffered by these so-called martyrs. Another exemplification from a theoretical point of view is the Jain ascetic practice of the *sallekhana*, a characteristic re-dimensioning of the perception of violence. In contrast to the Jain non-violence towards people or animals (which seems incompatible with the Jain involvement with power in the past), extreme violence in the form of self-inflicted death (fasting to death) is valued above all; in the ideology of this religious group this type of death it is not considered a suicide, nor even a violent act. This semantic inversion of violence and non-violence is to some extent comparable to the discourse on suicide made by the Heaven's Gate group (presented on the web pages of the group). Collective suicide, which we judge as a violent death, was deemed by them to be a joyful act of overcoming oneself and a transition to a higher dimension. Our instruments of analysis are here confronted with a hopeless methodological stumbling block. If, on the one hand, it is permissible to ask ourselves whether our perception of these acts as violent may be only an ethnocentric prejudice, we must be able, on the other hand, to judge violence without being bound by the self-representations and worldviews propounded by the religions we study. If we were to adopt, without a hint of suspicion, the mythological, symbolic, and theological justifications given for clitoridectomy and other mutilations of women's genitals,²⁷ nothing of what is being analyzed in these pages could be understood as violence, to the point that even forced conversion would be seen as offering to others the right path to salvation.

²⁷ For instance in the exemplary Dogon narration transmitted by M. Griaule, *Conversations with Ogotemmel: An Introduction to Dogon Religious Ideas*, Oxford: University Press 1977 (or. 1966), sp. ch. 24.

Difference and Violence

There is a type of religious violence that uses difference as its preferred vehicle of expression: that which results from not accepting the rules of cohabitation in areas where there is religious diversity. For various reasons having to do with identity, power and privilege, certain groups may want to hold a pre-eminent position that offends others. In this regard, bordering zones are especially sensitive. Such zones are marked by a strong interaction between different ideological, social, economic, and cultural models, with confronting identities, clashes of power and privilege, but also with a rich mixture of people and cultures. Frontier religions produce high doses of violence but also creativity and change: the Sikh synthesis is an excellent illustration.

The Hispanic area provides another good example. The Iberian Peninsula has constantly been a frontier region from the time of the ancient colonization processes at the beginning of the second millennium BCE until the present. Indeed, there were moments during the Middle Ages when the methods of internal control of the Hispanic territory were considered by many Christians as a crusade and by many Muslims as a *jihad*; at other times the cohabitation of the members of the two religions was more pacific.²⁸ In fact, the Hispanic imperial period of the Modern Age can be also understood as an extension of this frontier into Europe, the Mediterranean region, America, and Asia.

Furthermore, the Hispanic case has interesting features that differentiate it from another bordering zone that has also been part of an expansive process on a global level: North America. The North American frontier, built with the resources of modern industry, is

²⁸ The “three religions” or “three cultures” in medieval Spain is a motif that sails between the stereotypes of an idyllic or a violent coexistence: see the poetic picture of M.R. Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*, New York: Back Bay 2003, and the perhaps excessive deconstruction proposed by S. Fanjul, *La quimera de Al-Andalus*, Madrid: Siglo XXI 2004, esp. chs. 1 and 7.

based on the respect for difference in the religious domain. The Hispanic imperial border, on the contrary, was built on the denial of religious difference; it was a rare historical project, and one of the most noteworthy examples of the failure to fulfill the illusion of a unique universal religion.

The unity that the Catholic kings aimed to achieve by violence was to be kept in place by religion. The priests controlled the consciences and the behavior of the faithful in the social and personal domains with a high degree of homogeneity, creating a kind of ideological membrane that supported the system and joined together disparate lands.²⁹ Religious unity was applied so successfully in the colonies that even today the regions of America, Asia, and Africa that were once dominated by the Spanish and Portuguese monarchies are still largely characterized by their Catholic background. This was a system based on a high degree of violence against those who did not accept this religious unity and which created a new frontier of ideas and beliefs. It transformed the enemy by eliminating those who were different with the help of the colonial armies as much as by the Inquisition. The last attempt to strengthen the link of identity between the concepts of the Spanish and the Catholic, which took place in the Franco period, also took the form of a religious frontier against atheist communism as well as against religious difference.

These attempts represent the definitive failure of the effort to eliminate difference, a project that since the establishment of democracy in Spain is no longer viable. The reason for this is that democratic systems are characterized by a legal framework that, at least in theory, protects its citizens from discrimination, including that based on religion. They are founded on the fundamental, modern-age concept of equality before the law, which created new preconditions for the

²⁹ This was done by creating a folklore of the acceptable violence in words and symbols, the best example being perhaps the so-called "apostle of Spain," Santiago Matamoros (Saint James, the "Moor killer"): a national symbol redefined in recent times, when the statues of Santiago Matamoros are being removed from the churches because the iconography seems unacceptable in today's multireligious Spain.

development of religious diversity. In this context of equal rights before the law, religions are allowed to compete in a system that, for all practical purposes, can be called multireligious and which is equivalent to what in a wider cultural sense is known as multiculturalism. Multireligiosity is essentially different from the non-modern systems of religious diversity, in that power, identity, and privilege are not reserved for one particular religion. In this situation, all the religions that exist in a specific religious field have, in principle, the same legitimate right to manage their respective portions of symbolic power and to compete in offering their services. No religion can be persecuted nor can its development be impeded as long as it does not break the law. This equality of religions, supported by the force of the law, guarantees the right to be different and deactivates a large part of the most violent components of confrontations between religions. However, this does not completely erase the conflicts, since in every society discrepancies still exist, to a larger or smaller extent, between what is legal and what is socially acceptable, between the theoretical framework backed by laws and the enormous variability of situations in which difference is experienced in religious terms. Accordingly, in order to analyze violence and religion in the present world, we must also take into consideration the conflictive consequences that the creation of different multireligious environments might have.

Multireligiosity has three main features: tradition, conversion and immigration, and all three can generate violence. The tradition factor protects some groups, enabling them to demand privileges over the others based on the number of members, deep historical roots, and a greater contribution to identity. This factor stands in conflict with the laws that favor theoretical equality since it favors the particular social weight of certain religions so that they, even if they lack official status, are nevertheless able to demand, and may attain, greater prerogatives, support and funding. This happens almost everywhere in the world and only some countries, such as France and the United States, are exceptions by virtue of their efforts to avoid these kinds of privileges.

The conversion element can be especially conflictive in settings

where certain religions are deeply rooted and the converts choose faiths that the religious majority perceive as controversial. Latin America offers examples of violence perpetrated by Catholic majorities towards groups of converts to Evangelical Christianity, although there are also cases of the opposite (notably, Ríos Montt's actions in Guatemala). In many cases, the denial of the right to religious difference presupposes the denial of identity and ideological discrepancies. This is how the image of the "sect" member takes shape: the convert is seen as the victim of deceit and needs to be brought back to the "right path" through acceptable and legitimate use of violence.

Immigration is perhaps the field of adaptation to multireligiosity where violence is expressed more openly. For immigrants, the difference in the religions professed is also a sign that they belong to a cultural minority. The shock caused by the uprooting process (the immigrant's syndrome) can lead to the reinforcement of the signs of religious identity³⁰ in ways that may ultimately produce unrest and violence. Indeed, without this immigration factor, it is difficult to understand a "frontier drama" such as the March 11, 2004 attacks in Madrid: the cultural shock expressed itself in some immigrants' inability to accept a multireligious world (which degrades Islam from its position as the only true religion), and this in turn provided the pawns who were ready to sacrifice hundreds of innocent people to satisfy the desires of the geostrategists of Islamist terrorism who planned these attacks.

The majority perception of immigrants professing a different religion may also result in a conflictive and hostile environment and in a rejection of the immigrants' religion, regarded as foreign and unacceptable. In the face of this refusal, immigrants may tend to strengthen their religious identity marks by choosing the most radical or fundamentalist interpretations of their religion and by resorting to violence. The Spanish case offers, again, a range of significant examples: difficulties created by neighbors or authorities to Muslim communities wanting

³⁰ The example of Sayyid Qutb is interesting in this regard; see his autobiography, *Milestones*, Chicago: Kazi Publications 1993 (first published 1964).

to build mosques in certain areas; difficulties imposed on the education of the children of immigrants in certain schools; or violent responses to social problems.³¹ All these examples reflect how far removed the theoretical framework of equality is from reality and how close the Spanish situation is to the border model. The criticisms against certain stereotyped aspects of Islam — for example, those related to gender discrimination in the *shari'a*, activate the memories of many Spanish women who only thirty years ago could be imprisoned on charges of adultery. The violence arising from the adaptation to multireligiosity in Spain is nonetheless at present not comparable in intensity to that which sporadically erupts between Hindus and Muslims in India, and which constitutes an extreme illustration of the concept of border religions that I have proposed. The manipulation of religious differences and identities in the political arena of the world's largest democracy makes inter-religious violence one more resource for obtaining votes, in a game of differences that sometimes converts a usually mundane confrontation of parties into struggle of almost cosmic dimensions, endowed with strong symbolic and religious elements.

Having reached this point, I would like to sum up by making some final considerations. In the post-industrial societies characterized by a multireligious and globalized dynamic, the concepts of identity and difference in the area of religion are not necessarily opposites. The wide range of identities, from local to global, present in the modern world allow for a combination of identity and difference that does not need to lead to violence. On the other hand, while the capacity of the religion-power binomial for creating violence is presently decreasing, that of the religion-privilege one may last longer and may produce more violence. In conclusion, by joining observations on the past and the present we have shown how religion, in combinations with identity, power, privilege, and difference, acts as an ingredient that multiplies and increases violence. Religion, however, does not

³¹ See, for example, the report of a NGO interested in xenophobic attitudes in Spain: S.O.S. *Racismo. Informe anual sobre el racismo en el estado español*, Barcelona: Icaria 2004, esp. 255–86.

in itself have to be a cause of violence, as has been claimed in some forums; rather, religion is a resource used in settings where the main causes of events are of a geostrategic, economic, or political nature. Therefore, the solution to violence cannot be simply to eliminate or de-socialize religion. A formula within our reach is that of cohabiting with difference: learning to live in a progressively multireligious and multicultural world respecting the richness of diversity,³² while at the same time seeking some minimally consensual points of view which will allow for a life in common without having to resort to violence.³³

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³² A central question in the debate concerns the construction of a multicultural (and multireligious) concept of justice that will overcome the violent implications of multiculturalism; see J.T. Levy, *The Multiculturalism of Fear*, Oxford: University Press 2000, esp. chs. 1 and 8; also W. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Oxford: University Press 1995. It seems, nevertheless, that Eurocentric prejudices are difficult to eradicate in the reflection on justice; see, R. Sennett, *Respect in a World of Inequality*, New York: Norton 2003; W. Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship*, Oxford: University Press 2001, esp. ch. 7; D. Schnapper, *La relation à l'autre: Au coeur de la pensée sociologique*, Paris: Gallimard 1998, esp. ch. XII.

³³ One of the challenges to religions, in particular in the forums of inter-religious dialogue, is that of being able to build bridges that break violence by means of attaining a consensual ethic that devalues aggression; see H. Küng, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic*, New York: Crossroad 1991, and also the final documents of various inter-religious forums, especially the World's Religions Parliaments (despite the problems of translating these words into effective practice); also the analyzes of A. Etzioni: *The New Golden Rule: Community and Morality in a Democratic Society*, New York: Basic Books 1998, esp. ch. 8; and *From Empire to Community: A New Approach to International Relations*, New York-London: Palgrave Macmillan 2004.

FRUITFUL DEATH: MIRCEA ELIADE AND ERNST JÜNGER ON HUMAN SACRIFICE, 1937–1945

CRISTIANO GROTTANELLI

Summary

Mircea Eliade, the writer and historian of religions, and Ernst Jünger, the hero of the Great War, novelist, and essayist, met in the 1950s and co-edited twelve issues of the periodical *Antaios*. Before they met and cooperated, however, and while the German writer knew about Eliade from their common friend, Carl Schmitt, they both dealt with the subject of human sacrifice. Eliade began to do so in the thirties, and his interest in that theme was at least in part an aspect of his political activism on behalf of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, or the Iron Guard, the nationalistic and anti-Semitic movement lead by Corneliu Codreanu. Sacrificial ideology was a central aspect of the Legion's political theories, as well as of the practice of its members. After the Iron Guard was outlawed by its allies, and many of its members had been killed, and while the Romanian regime of Marshal Ion Antonescu was still fighting alongside the National Socialist regime in the Second World War, Eliade turned to other aspects of sacrificial ideology. In 1939 he wrote the play *Iphigenia*, celebrating Agamemnon's daughter as a willing victim whose death made the Greek conquest of Troy possible; and as a member of the regime's diplomatic service in Lisbon he published a book in Portuguese on Romanian virtues (1943), in which he presented what he called *Two Myths of Romanian Spirituality*, extolling his nation's readiness to die through the description of the sacrificial traditions of *Master Manole* and of the Ewe Lamb (*Mioritza*). Jünger's attitude to sacrifice ran along lines that were less traditional: possibly already while serving as a *Wehrmacht* officer, in his pamphlet *Der Friede*, the German writer attributed sacrificial status to all the victims of the Second World War, soldiers, workmen, and unknowing innocents, and saw their death as the ransom of a peace "without victory or defeat." In this article, the sacrificial ideologies of the two intellectuals are compared in order to reflect upon the complex interplay between traditional religious themes, more or less freely re-interpreted and transformed, political power, and violent conflict, in an age of warfare marked by fascisms and by the terrible massacre some refer to by the name of an ancient Greek sacrificial practice.

Welches soll nun das Heilswort unserer Betrachtung sein?
Es lautet: Der Krieg muss für alle Frucht bringen.

Ernst Jünger, *Der Friede*

1. *Eliade, Jünger, and Human Sacrifice*

Before they met and cooperated, and during the Second World War, while they were fighting, or working, on the same side, Mircea Eliade and Ernst Jünger both wrote on the theme “religion and violence” and on a specific aspect of that theme that seems to be its most typical expression: human sacrifice. For the Romanian intellectual, the subject was a central one already during the thirties, as he became a very active sympathizer of the violently nationalistic and anti-Semitic Legion of the Archangel Michael, or the Iron Guard, and it remained central for him throughout the war and later. For Jünger, it emerged during the forties, as a specific version of the theme of death in battle that had been the *Leitmotiv* of his first books and essays since his experiences in the Foreign Legion (1912) and in the Great War of 1914–1918. In the present article, I shall present the respective positions of Eliade and Jünger on the subject; then I shall compare these positions, and I shall reflect on their meaning in the general context of the World War and of its massacres. In particular, I shall show how both positions are connected to a subject that has rightly given rise to an ocean of discussion: the massacre of the European Jews by the National Socialist regime. In the light of the treatment of the sacrificial theme by these two authors, it is perhaps possible to contribute with a few modest reflections to a better meditation on that immense and terrible event, which was, and still is, often interpreted as a sacrifice, or at least as sacred, precisely because it was *tremendum*.

2. *Mircea Eliade's Play Iphigenia (1939–1941)*

In 1937, Mircea Eliade dedicated no less than three articles to the two Iron Guard martyrs, Ion Motza and Vasile Marin, killed in Spain where they had joined the troops fighting for Francisco Franco, and

solemnly buried in Romania on February 11, 1937.¹ In the dramatic article published in *Vremea*, the magazine of the extreme right, openly favourable to the Iron Guard, on January 24, 1937, Eliade stated that Ion Motza's death was full of profound meaning. It was, he wrote, "a sacrifice destined to bear fruit, to strengthen Christianity, to energize the youth," because Motza "was impatient to sacrifice himself, to teach his generation a way of life made up of heroism and self-denial."² According to his biographer, Florin Turcanu,³ it was Motza's death, and not the assassination of "the Captain" Corneliu Codreanu, the leader of the Legion of the Archangel Michael killed by the Romanian police in the night between November 29 and November 30, 1938, of which Eliade thought as he wrote *Iphigenia*, his first and most controversial play, in the late autumn⁴ of 1939.

In the second volume of his autobiography, *Les moissons du solstice*, Eliade mentions the play:

At the end of the fall of 1939, I wrote my first play, *Iphigenia*, and I submitted it to the reading committee of the National Theatre, who accepted it. But I never saw it on stage. It was played at the beginning of 1941, and, in spite of the excellent staging and publicity, was unsuccessful. I was told that the play lacked "dramatic nerve," and this was probably true. If *Iphigenia* has some merit, it is of a different kind.⁵

Turcanu tells us it took Eliade only four days to write the play, as the author himself once stated.⁶ According to Eliade's biographer, this

¹ Florin Turcanu, *Mircea Eliade: Le prisonnier de l'histoire*, Paris: La Découverte 2003, 266–67. Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco: L'oubli du fascisme*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 2002, 186–88. It seems obvious that the precise date on which Eliade wrote the play points to, or denies, the connection between *Iphigenia* and Codreanu's death.

² See Turcanu, *Mircea Eliade*, 267.

³ Ibid. 298.

⁴ Or, according to Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco*, 197, in the month of December. It seems obvious that the precise date on which Eliade wrote the play points to, or disproves, a connection between *Iphigenia* and Codreanu's death.

⁵ Mircea Eliade, *Mémoire II (1937–1960): Les moissons du solstice*, Paris: Gallimard 1988, 58.

⁶ Turcanu, *Mircea Eliade*, 298, quoting Eliade's correspondence: *Europa, Asia, America*, vol. I, Bucharest: Humanitas 1999, 198.

is a sign of the feverish state of mind of the Romanian intellectual, expressed also by the forebodings of death that fill the text, and by the way in which Iphigenia, the young daughter of king Agamemnon, ecstatically accepts to become the victim of the human sacrifice that shall allow the Achaean fleet to sail towards Troy. Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine points out that Eliade had been arrested on July 14, 1938, because of his political activities in favour of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, after that organization was suppressed by king Carol II, and that he finally returned home on November 12 of that year, after having spent four months in a concentration camp.⁷ As a consequence of this, Eliade was forbidden from April 1938 to April 1940 to teach at the University of Bucharest, where he had been the assistant of Professor Nae Ionescu. Ionescu, who had also been arrested during the winter of 1938 as an influential sympathizer of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, was detained in the same camp until the autumn of 1939, after which he returned to his villa in Baneasa on the outskirts of Bucharest, where he died of a heart attack on March 15, 1940.

Iphigenia is described by Laignel-Lavastine as a text produced by Eliade in a period during which it was impossible for him to speak out clearly, as he had before he was arrested, and to express his sympathy for the Iron Guard. This is why he used a more metaphoric discourse (*un langage crypté, plus métaphorique*), as in *Iphigenia*. “In this three-act play,” she explains,

one finds all the ideological themes that were dear to him — above all the glorification of sacrifice and of patriotic death — aptly woven together in a theatrical text that had *a priori* no direct connection with the European and Romanian present. Many passages repeat, almost word for word, the contents of the articles Eliade had dedicated in 1937 to the “sacrifice” of Ion Motza and Vasile Marin.⁸

To these statements, Laignel-Lavastine adds further data and observations. The play, she writes, was reprinted in 1951 by a publishing house run by Romanian refugees in Argentina, and the new edition,

⁷ Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco*, 185–201.

⁸ *Ibid.* 197–98.

containing a previously unpublished preface by Eliade, dated August 1951, was dedicated to two friends: Haig Acterian, who campaigned for the Iron Guard together with Eliade during the Romanian political elections in December 1937, and Mihail Sebastian, Eliade's Jewish friend, whose diary, published in Romanian in 1996 and in French in 1998, contains information both on the pogroms of the Iron Guard (January 1941) and on Eliade's conversion to the ideology of the Legion (especially in 1937, and specifically in connection with the deaths of Motza and Marin).⁹

Though *Iphigenia* was reviewed by many, it is to Mihail Sebastian's diary that one should turn to find a correct evaluation of the play: Sebastian had read it in 1940, and, though he did not go to the opening performance (February 10, 1941), which took place two weeks after a pogrom enacted by the Legion, he did go to see it at the Bucharest National Theatre at the beginning of March. In the entry dated March 6, 1941, his reaction was not too negative; indeed, he thought the text was better than he had found it when he had read it, but he noted that the actors were loud, pompous and vulgar. For the sake of my argument in the present article, Sebastian's reasons for not going to the *première* are more important than his actual opinion of the play as a text. The opening performance would surely be, he wrote on February 12, like

the meeting of a *cuib* (that is to say, of a Iron Guard cell, the smallest organized group of members of that political organization). Nina (Eliade's wife), with whom I spoke on the telephone, told me it was a great success. Unknowingly, she confirmed my suspicions. Though the text is full of allusions and of implied meanings, it is hard to prohibit an *Iphigenia*. In spite of this, I find the symbolism gross. The play could have been called *Iphigenia, or, The Iron Guard Sacrifice*, with the addition of a good sub-title. After five months of Iron Guard government and three days of Iron Guard rebellion (i.e., of internecine fight between the Legion and its allies in the extreme right-wing coalition government then ruling Romania), after so many murders and fires and so much sacking, one can say that in any case that first night came just at the right time.¹⁰

⁹ Ibid. 188–208.

¹⁰ Ibid. 198. Both Laignel-Lavastine and Turcanu convey to their readers that these

3. *The Iron Guard and Human Sacrifice, 1933–1945*

Thus, in *Iphigenia* human sacrifice had a double meaning. First of all, it had the general meaning that human sacrifice takes on in the context of modern war: the willingness of the victims to give up their lives for what the ruling classes have successfully presented to them as the safety, or the greatness, of their fatherland. In addition to this more obvious meaning of the concept, however, another one could, in the Romanian context of 1939–1941, be found in Eliade's play, derived from the more specific Iron Guard ideology of death and sacrifice. When Sebastian stated in his diary that "it was hard to prohibit *Iphigenia*," he was referring to the first and more generic meaning, which made the play "patriotic" in the opinion of the Romanian government, and thus, according to that government, not only acceptable but commendable in that precise context, when the attention was upon a war fought on the side of the Fascist-National Socialist "Axis." But what he saw in it already when reading the text, and what he expected to recognize more vividly still during the first performance he avoided going to, was the second, implied meaning, which turned the occasion into "a *cuib* meeting" dedicated to the celebration of *Iphigenia*, or, *The Iron Guard Sacrifice*: the sacrificial discourse of the Iron Guard. On this discourse, so important both for understanding

lines in Sebastian's diary was left out when it was translated into French: see Mihail Sebastian, *Journal (1935/1944)*, traduit du roumain par Alain Paruit, Paris: Stock 1998, 288, while they may be found in the Romanian edition: Mihail Sebastian, *Jurnal 1935–1944*, Bucharest: Humanitas 1996, 305. The reasons for this and other blatant "transformations" of Sebastian's text in the French edition are not clear to me; but surely Laignel-Lavastine's explanation on is not convincing. Referring to other missing lines in the French edition, she writes: "Pour des raisons techniques, et non pas idéologiques, ces lignes ne figurent pas dans l'édition française (Stock, 1998), pour laquelle il a fallu couper environs 20% du texte intégral" (*Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco*, 189, n. 1). As for the reasons why, during a war, "it is hard to prohibit an *Iphigenia*," see below, and compare with my *Il sacrificio*, Roma and Bari: Laterza 1999, 3–7, and with the French case of the "National Rites of Sacrifice" discussed by Ivan Strenski, *Contesting Sacrifice: Religion, Nationalism, and Social Thought in France*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 2002.

the Iron Guard's ideology — similar to that of other Fascist organizations, but at the same time very specific¹¹ — and for reconstructing Eliade's peculiar *Weltanschauung* during the 1930s, I shall present a series of observations.

In particular, in order to understand the sacrificial ideology of the Iron Guard, one should begin by dealing with two symmetrically opposed interpretations of the discourses and practices in question, advanced respectively by Mircea Eliade in the second volume of his *Mémoire* (1980),¹² and by Furio Jesi in his book *Cultura di destra* (1979),¹³ the first important contribution on the connection between Eliade's theories and the ideas and behaviours of the Legion. The two interpretations are opposed in various ways; but the simplest, and probably the most correct, explanation of this opposition may be found in the respective attitudes of their authors: a blandly positive attitude, and an attempt to present his own past in an acceptable way, in the case of Eliade; and a fiercely hostile stance in the case of Jesi, who was an Italian left-wing intellectual of Jewish descent.

In order to deal convincingly with the two interpretations, and thus to tackle our problem convincingly, it is important to keep in mind that the Iron Guard ideology of death and sacrifice was enacted most emphatically on February 11, 1937, during the dramatic funeral of the martyrs Motza and Marin. The bodies of the two heroes were brought back to Romania from Spain in a train that crossed Germany and Poland, and upon their arrival in Bucharest they were placed in an railway carriage that travelled throughout the country. At each halt, crowds gathered and were made to swear that they were ready to sacrifice their lives to avenge them. In 1933, Codreanu wrote that “the members of the Legion love death, because their blood shall

¹¹ On the Iron Guard, one can still rely on the monograph by Radu Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel: Fascist Ideology in Romania*, Boulder, CO: East European Monographs 1990.

¹² Eliade, *Mémoire II*, 31–35, 59–68.

¹³ Furio Jesi, *Cultura di destra*, Milano: Garzanti 1979, 11–66 (ch. I, *Cultura di destra e religione della morte*).

cement Legionary Romania”;¹⁴ this was echoed most precisely by Radu Gyr’s *Hymn of the Legionary Youth* (“We shall erect a thousand eternal iconostases,/ in the sun;/ we shall build them with rock, fire and sea,/ and cement them with Dacian blood”), while three years later an Iron Guard anthem, the *Hymn to the Heroes Motza and Marin*, put things somewhat differently by proclaiming that “to the Dacian people the bones (of the two martyrs)/ shall ever be a foundation;/ as blockheads cemented by the century,/ they shall defy eternity.”¹⁵ Eliade himself describes this fundamental, religious aspect of the Iron Guard ideology, in the second volume of his *Mémoires*:

In 1937–1938, death was the most popular theme among Legionaries, and the death of Motza and Marin was the exemplary model. Motza’s statement, “your own ashes are the most powerful dynamite” had become the new Gospel. Masses, obituaries, fasts, and prayers made up a large part of “Legionary activities.”¹⁶

The most striking aspect, however, of Eliade’s description of the Iron Guard’s theme of death and sacrifice in his late writings, is the introduction of an element of non-violence into Codreanu’s theory and practice. Commenting upon the capture of the Captain, which led to his death in November 1938, he wrote:

By way of many messages, (Codreanu) had assured the Minister of the Interior, Armand Calinescu, that the members of the Iron Guard would not react, not even if they were dragged by their feed and tortured. He had ordered his men not only to refrain from violence, but even to forego any form of passive resistance, and had actually decided to dissolve his party, *All for the Fatherland* (the name chosen by the Legion for the 1937 elections). Calinescu’s tactics had worked: all the members of the Iron Guard had let themselves be arrested, they were now in jail and waited, like rats, to be burned alive. No doubt Codreanu died, like many other Iron Guard members, believing that his sacrifice would hasten the Movement’s victory.¹⁷

¹⁴ Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco*, 186–87 (Motza’s “funeral”), and 116 (Codreanu’s statement).

¹⁵ For the songs and anthems of the Iron Guard, I rely on an Italian translation: *Guardia di Ferro: Al passo con l’Arcangelo. Ritmi legionari*, Parma: Edizioni all’insegna del Veltro 1982. For the two hymns quoted here, see 101–2 and 106–8.

¹⁶ *Mémoire II*, 35.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 36.

On the same page from which the quotation is taken, Eliade connects Codreanu's attitude with the leader's preoccupation with "the salvation of souls" rather than with "political victory," and contrasts the Captain's attitude to that of Mihail Polihroniade, a member of the Legion who, even though he was no less brave than Codreanu, gave the right importance to victory, and, after his leader's death, criticized his behaviour as being the consequence of too many "masses and obituaries." Almost a year after the Captain's death, Eliade adds, Polihroniade was executed:

(Though he did not put his trust in masses and obituaries,) he died no less serenely than those who believed. He asked for a cigarette, lighted it and smiled as he walked to the wall where the machine-guns awaited him.¹⁸

On p. 61 of *Les moissons du solstice*, the behaviour of the Iron Guard centred upon heroic self-surrender is described as a general rule, and not just as the choice of a given moment, culminating in the capture of Codreanu. In that passage, the murder of the right-wing intellectual Nicolae Iorga by Legionary activists is presented as follows:

We were horrified to learn of the assassination of N. Iorga and of V. Magdearu, as well as that of a group of prisoners in the Bucharest prison. In committing their crimes in the night of November 29, 1940, the Iron Guard commandos thought they were avenging Codreanu. But in reality they were annihilating the religious, "sacrificial" value of the execution of members of the Legion under Carol II, and compromising the Iron Guard so irreparably that from then on it was considered a pro-Nazi and terrorist organization.¹⁹

In describing the sacrificial ideal of the Iron Guard as a passive, almost pacifist attitude, and in accusing the murderers of Iorga and Magdearu of *betraying* that ideal, Eliade appeared to misunderstand the very nature of that religious and political ideology, consisting of a *combination* of Orthodox Christian *self-sacrifice* — modelled upon the redeeming death of the Saviour and upon the archaic, pre-Christian

¹⁸ Ibid. 35–36.

¹⁹ Ibid. 61

view of the fruitful death of willing victims — and the *warlike behaviour* of members of a military elite, the Guard or Legion headed by Codreanu, ever ready to strike Romania's enemies to death. Thus, sacrifice (of course, the sacrifice of members of the Legion) was inextricably blended with revenge, as was already the case in the solemn oaths pledged by the crowds mourning for the heroes of 1937,²⁰ and, towards the other end of the chronological spectrum, with the assassination of Armand Calinescu in September 1939, accomplished as a retaliation for the Captain's death. From the very beginning of the Legion's history it killed for revenge, as on December 30, 1933, when Prime Minister Ion G. Duca, a member of the Liberal Party, was assassinated by three members of the Legion who wanted to punish him for his "persecution" of their organization. A fundamental, symmetrical aspect of this ideology of revenge was the readiness of the Iron Guard members to accept the consequences of their violence, completing a system composed of vengeful violence, sacrificial expiation, and further vengeance. This is well expressed by the following statement, attributed to Codreanu:

In theory, Legionary violence is justified only if followed by expiation: many Legionary activists gave themselves up (to the police) after committing a crime, even if they could easily have escaped — and some ended by giving themselves up even when they had actually started to escape.²¹

So much for Eliade's position expressed in *Les moissons du solstice*. As for Jesi, on the basis of a theory that has been presented many times in dealing with the National Socialist massacre of European Jews, and is most recently exemplified by Michael Ley's position in his book *Holocaust als Menschenopfer*, he suggested in 1979 that, within the sacrificial ideology of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, the Jews were the intended victims.²² To deal with this hypothetical

²⁰ See above, and Turcanu, *Mircea Eliade*, 266–67.

²¹ Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco*, 116–20.

²² Jesi, *Cultura di destra*. On the massacre of Jews in Romania, see Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of the Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime (1940–1944)*, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee 2000 — but the subject is

interpretation, one should begin by stating that the Iron Guard pogroms, not intended as sacrificial rituals, and usually not ending in the self-denunciation of those who were responsible, were envisaged by the Legion as *revenge* against the Jews, who were seen as Jesus' murderers and as arch-enemies of the Nation. Indeed, I am convinced that, though it rarely referred explicitly to the traditional "ritual murder" accusations, the Legionary image of the Jews was based upon the ancient myth that presented them as killing Christian children by sucking their blood.²³ In his book *The Transfiguration of Romania*, published in Bucharest 1936 by the editing house of the pro-Legionary periodical *Vremea*, Emil Cioran, later a member of the Iron Guard and always a friend of Mircea Eliade, wrote that

treated in detail in Laignel-Lavastine's book. Jesi's position should be compared with that of Michael Ley, *Holokaust als Menschenopfer: Vom Christentum zur politischer Religion des Nationasozialismus*, Münster, Hamburg, London: LIT Verlag 2002. Ley writes: "... in the National Socialist self-understanding, the murder of the European Jews is a sacred rite, enacted as a human sacrifice in the annihilation camps (*Vernichtungslagern*). This sacrifice was considered to be an expiation offering, and was identified with the intended re-creation of the World." It is easy to reply by stating that Hitler and his regime envisaged the Jews not as sacrificial victims, but as noxious beings, and considered their destruction not as a sacred ritual, but as a necessary "technical" operation. On this see Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer*, Torino: Einaudi 1995, 27–28, and Anna-Vera Sullam Calimani, *I nomi dello sterminio*, Torino: Einaudi 2001, 77–101, especially 85–86. As for the ideology of sacrifice (*Opfer*), it was important for the National Socialist regime, but, as is shown by J.P. Stern, *Hitler: The Führer and the People*, London: Fontana 1984, 28–34, it was believed to consist of the *Opfer* of German victims. Two meaningful texts by Adolf Hitler (respectively, a letter from the front dated February 15, 1915, and a speech dated January 30, 1936) are presented by Stern (33, 184) and testify to this.

²³ On this I quote only R. Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988, to which one should add Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Mediaeval Jews*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1999. I have discussed the mythical system in question in Grottanelli, *Il sacrificio*, 87–88 and 127. It is attested as late as the twentieth century, and specifically in National Socialist propaganda, e.g., in Goebbels' *Der Angriff*, in 1929, in Julius Streicher's *Der Stürmer*, on May 1, 1934, and in the film *Der Ewige Jude*, 1939–1940.

to speak of them (*scil.* the Jews) as aggressive vampires is to state the obvious and to mention a trait that is characteristic of their nature, even though it does not help to solve the mystery of the Jewish being.²⁴

As in the case of the blood of the martyrs cementing the wall of the Fatherland, the statements of the intellectuals about the Jew as a vampire sucking the blood of Romanians corresponded well to the words of hymns, ballads and anthems. For example in the *Marching Song of the Storoijinetz Legionaries*, we find the following verse:

See how Judas runs his claws
deep into my body,
see how my blood flows,
see how the Jews suck it!²⁵

If we envisage the Iron Guard ideology of human sacrifice as such an endless, circular sequence of vengeful violence, self-denunciation, sacrifice, and further revenge, and if we keep in mind that within that system the Jew was presented as a bloodthirsty vampire — one who was, I submit, in the original form of the accusation, an evil sacrificer of Christian victims — it becomes impossible to follow Furio Jesi. In my opinion, the correct answer to the question of the victims' identity within the Legionary ideology of sacrifice consisted precisely of the Romanian (or, in a more archaizing form, the Dacian) quality of those victims, while the arch-enemy was envisaged in ways that derive most clearly from its traditional Christian configuration as a bloody sacrificer. Together, the connection between vengeful murder and the self-surrendering of the pious assassins, on the one hand, and the Romanian identity of the heroic killers/victims, on the other, made up the Iron Guard's sacrificial system: the interpretations put forward by Jesi (1979) and by Eliade (1980) are misleading.

²⁴ Emil Cioran, *Schîmbarea la fata a României*, Bucharest 1936, 130; see Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco*, 161.

²⁵ *Guardia di Ferro*, 99–100.

4. Eliade's "Two Romanian Myths" in his *Portuguese Book*, 1943

To Mircea Eliade's shrewd biographer we owe the paradoxical observation that, as one may deduce from *Les moissons du solstice*,²⁶ Nae Ionescu's tragic death, so deeply mourned by the Romanian intellectual and by the Professor's other students, actually freed Eliade from his political obligations and made it possible for him to start a "new life" after the destruction of the Iron Guard.²⁷ In the present context this observation is a sufficient comment on the fact that Eliade was accepted as a member of the Romanian Diplomatic Service by the regime of the *Conducator* General Ion Antonescu, and that he in turn accepted to work for that regime, even after Antonescu had crushed his Iron Guard allies — with whom, on September 14, 1940, he had formed a "National Legionary State" — after their "rebellion" in January 1941. Antonescu, who had remained the sole real political authority in the country, was an ally of Nazi Germany, and in the summer of 1941 he declared war on Hitler's enemies. Eliade, who had been accepted as a Cultural Secretary in the Romanian Embassy in London on April 10, 1940, ten months before the break between Antonescu and the Iron Guard, retained his diplomatic function after the bloody conflict between the *Conducator* and the Legion. On February 10, 1941, he left London for Lisbon, where he worked for the Romanian Embassy as a Press Secretary until the downfall in 1945.²⁸

In Lisbon, Eliade became an admirer of the Salazar regime and, in the summer of 1942, he even imagined himself to have been chosen to convey a secret message from the Portuguese dictator to Antonescu.²⁹

²⁶ *Mémoire II*, 18.

²⁷ Turcanu, *Mircea Eliade*, 299–301.

²⁸ This period of Eliade's life is reconstructed by both Turcanu and Laignel-Lavastine (respectively 299–342 and 275–328), and the two reconstructions differ only in details. An important source for the years 1941–1945 is Eliade's Lisbon diary, which he never published. It is now available in an unabridged Spanish translation: Mircea Eliade, *Diario Portugués (1941–1945)*, Barcelona: Editorial Kairós 2001.

²⁹ See Cristiano Grottanelli, "Mircea Eliade, Carl Schmitt, René Guénon, 1942," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 219 (2002) 325–56.

In order to strengthen the relationships between Portugal and Romania, he presented Salazar's regime to his countrymen by publishing a small book in Romanian on the Portuguese "counterrevolution," and, symmetrically, he wrote a short volume on Romania that was translated into Portuguese and Spanish and published in the respective capitals in 1943. An Italian translation of the Portuguese text, *Os Romanos, Latinos de Oriente*, was published in 1997 as *Breve storia della Romania e dei Rumeni*, and the Spanish edition, *Los Rumanos: Breviario historico*, was translated into English by Rodica Mihaela Scafes and published in Bucharest in 1992 under the title *The Romanians: A Concise History*. In this book, two variations on the theme of sacrificial death are described as the two most important "myths of Romanian spirituality":

In any culture there is always a central myth that is revealed and present in all its great creations. The spiritual life of the Romanians has been dominated by two myths, which express with accomplished spontaneity their spiritual vision of the universe and the existential value. The first one is the legend of *Master Manole*, who, according to the tradition, raised the superb cathedral at Curtea-de-Arges. According to the legend, everything Manole and his skilled workers built during the day would disappear during the night. In order to stand, the edifice needed to have a soul, and this could only be achieved by sacrificing a human being. When Manole and his builders understood the cause of the caducity of their work, they decided to build alive (*sic*) the first person who would approach the place where they were working. The next day, early in the morning, Manole caught glimpse of his wife who was carrying their infant in her arms and was hurrying to bring him some food. Then Manole prayed to God to start a storm so that his wife should take the back track. But the torrential rain God started listening to his prayer could not turn the foredoomed wife from her way. And so Master Manole himself was forced to build his wife and son in, in order to keep his oath and be able to build up that magnificent church, which from that moment onwards did not collapse any more.

This legend is not a creation of the Romanian people. It can be found in all the countries of Southeast Europe. Essentially, the legend is the mythical and epic formula of one (*sic*) of the most popular rituals in the world, namely the "construction rituals", which are based on the belief that, in order to last, any construction has to be "animated" through the immolation of a being, whether a human being or an animal. Nevertheless, the legend of Master Manole is, according to folklorists, the most complete, the most beautiful and the richest

in spiritual significances (*sic*). Here the folk poetic inspiration has created a masterly work that may be compared with the most beautiful creations of world folk poetry. What counts is the fact that the Romanians have chosen this mythical theme and have given it a matchless artistic and moral expression. And they have chosen it because the Romanian soul identifies itself in the myth of the supreme sacrifice which makes a work made by man's hands, whether a cathedral, a homeland or a hut, enduring. They have sung in numberless lines the sacrifice of Master Manole, because they knew that in this way they were narrating their own historical life, their permanent sacrifice. The Romanians' option for this particular legend is significant in itself. They would not have used their entire poetic genius and all spiritual resources to remake a myth if this had not revealed the reverberation the myth had in the (obviously: in *their*, C.G.) collective consciousness.³⁰

In this text, sacrifice is presented as the most typical of all Romanian cultural traits, and, even if the "epic formula of a 'constructive ritual'" is found "in all the countries of Southeast Europe" (and, I should add, often connected with the construction of famous bridges or other important monuments), and the ritual in question is "one of the most popular rituals in the world," the author states that, "according to folklorists" the Romanian version of the formula, sung in the *Ballad of Master Manole*, is "the most complete, the most beautiful and the richest in spiritual significances." In spite of the fact that, in an article he wrote in Lisbon on December 3, 1936, Ion Motza compared that sacrificial death to his own future sacrifice, Eliade's presentation of this specific, hyper-Romanian legend describes a human sacrifice that differs somewhat from the Iron Guard's sacrificial complex I have discussed so far. Not only is the Iron Guard never mentioned, but two important aspects of the Legionary theme (or, for that matter, of the play *Iphigenia*) are absent: the *war context* (the sacrifice gives "life" to a construction, in the *Master Manole* legend, a church, in other Eastern European cases, a bridge), and the *self-offering of the victims* (an unknowing wife and mother, and "an infant," who is, by definition,

³⁰ Mircea Eliade, *The Romanians: A Concise History*, Bucharest: "Roza Vinturilor" 1992, 47–48.

unable to consent or to dissent). Precisely these two elements, conflict and consent, are present, however, in the other “myth of Romanian spirituality” described by Eliade in his 1943 booklet:

But even more than in the legend of Master Manole, the Romanians identify themselves in a splendid folk poem called *Mioritza* (*The Ewe Lamb*), that can be found everywhere in numberless variants. It is called a “folk poem,” but, as happens with all great creations of the genius of a people, it takes affinity with religion, morals and metaphysics. It is the simple and sincere story of a shepherd who, though warned by an ewe lamb against the imminent danger of being killed by two of his companions, who were envying him for his sheep, does not run away but accepts death. This serene attitude in front of death, this way of seeing death as a mystical marriage to the Whole has acquired matchless accents in *Mioritza* (*sic*). We are faced with an original vision of life and death — the latter being seen as a bride promised to the entire world — that is expressed in an excellent lyrical form rather than philosophical terms.³¹

The second myth in Eliade’s pair is discussed briefly as follows:

Mioritza is one of the folk creations that helps one best to understand the attitude of the Romanian soul in front of death. . . . Death is not a diminution of the human being; on the contrary, it is an increase, from the metaphysical point of view, of course. Man should not run away from death and even less so (*sic*) should he lament upon its arrival; death is a fact of cosmic size that has to be accepted with equanimity and even with joy, because due to it the individual frees himself from his limits. This is not a lyrical species of pantheism, although nature

³¹ Ibid. 48. As for Motza’s use of the *Master Manole* theme, see Paola Pisi, “I ‘tradizionalisti’ e la formazione del pensiero di Eliade,” in Luciano Arcella, Paola Pisi and Roberto Scagno (eds.), *Confronto con Mircea Eliade: Archetipi mitici e identità storica*, Milano: Jaca Book 1998, 43–133, at 113–115 n. 130. I find the passage in question in the Italian translation of some of Motza’s letters and other writings, printed by a publishing house of the extreme right: *Testamento di Ion Motza: Il tributo di sangue della Guardia di Ferro di Romania nella lotta contro il bolscevismo in Spagna*, Parma: Edizioni all’insegna del veltro 1984, 42–43. The passage is the following: “Our action is a corner-stone of this new Romanian Legionary building, of a building that — following a destiny which has been thus since the time of the legend of Master Manole — has demanded that we be buried in the foundations, so that centuries shall not demolish it.” This booklet is presented as a reprint of a previous edition, 1937.

participates in this act of reintegration, because nature is not identified with God, but is seen as a creation of God. Through death the soul is reintegrated in the big (*sic*) cosmic family, which is, as a whole, the work of the Creator.³²

Though this second Romanian tradition contains what the first one lacks, so that the two together form a couple that may be compared to the Iron Guard's sacrificial ideology (but without any reference to the Iron Guard itself!), it is not possible to dwell on it here. The theme of *reintegration* we have seen quoted in *Os Romenos*, *Latinos de Oriente* to explain the meaning of *Mioritza* was central in another book by Eliade, *Mitul Reintegrării*, prepared in Bucharest in June 1942 — about a year before the small volume on Romania appeared in Lisbon and in Madrid, and slightly more than a year after Mihail Sebastian saw *Iphigenia*. The best answer to that treatment of the touching story of the Ewe Lamb, however, was published much later, as Georges Dumézil's contribution to the *Cahier de l'Herne* dedicated in 1976 to Mircea Eliade, bearing the title *Le message avant la mort*.³³

More should be said of the *Master Manole* legend, which was the object of Eliade's volume *Comentarii la legenda Mesterului Manole*, Bucharest 1943. In the preface to that book the author explains that its contents had been part of a course he had given at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Bucharest during the academic year 1936–1937, as a substitute teacher for the Chair of Metaphysics held by Professor Nae Ionescu. Eliade's work on the spiritual meaning of the mythical sacrifice of Manole's wife was published in Bucharest while he was in Lisbon and shortly after Stalingrad, but it dated back to the time when he was a faithful collaborator of Nae Ionescu who wrote enthusiastic articles extolling the sacrifice of Motza and Marin.³⁴

As for the meaning of the two Romanian myths taken together, the

³² Ibid. 48–49.

³³ Georges Dumézil, *Le message avant la mort*, in Constantin Tacu (ed.), *L'Herne. Mircea Eliade*, Éditions de l'Herne, Paris 1978, pp. 88–91.

³⁴ On this aspect of the *Comentarii*, see my article "Mircea Eliade, Carl Schmitt, René Guénon, 1942," 349–56. In examining the *Comentarii* and *Mitul Reintegrării*, I have availed myself of two excellent Italian editions of those books: Mircea Eliade,

Press Secretary of the Lisbon Embassy presented it thus in the concluding lines of the paragraph he had called *The Two Myths of Romanian Spirituality*:

A culture, like an individual, is revealed to us not only through the way it approaches life, but also through its attitude towards death. The value attributed to death has considerable importance for the understanding of a culture or an individual. [. . .] This vision of death (*scil.*, the vision we find in the “Two Myths of Romanian Spirituality”) is enhanced and rounded off by many other Romanian folk creations. The same conception is present in the poems of Mihail Eminescu, one of the greatest writers of the 19th century. It is also present in the entire folklore of the Romanian people, as well as in its funeral rites. It is perhaps a conception inherited from its Geto-Dacian ancestors, or perhaps an original approach of Christianity which, let us not forget, has attributed a positive value to death. Fact is that the Romanians attribute to death a significance in harmony with their Christian conception about existence (*sic*), which, as we have seen, is based in the belief in a cosmic order established by God and the conviction that, throughout centuries, good will triumph over evil.

These two myths — that of *Master Manole* and that of *Mioritza* — are the more so interesting as (*sic*), generally, the Romanians cannot be considered as “mystical.” They are a religious people, but also a humane, vigorous and optimistic people that rejects the frenzy and exaltation implied by the idea of “mysticism.” Common sense is a dominant form of its spiritual life.³⁵

Before I conclude this part of my article, I wish to comment briefly upon the fact that, in his Portuguese and Spanish book from 1943, Eliade qualified the Romanian view of death and sacrifice as a view typical of an entire national community, and as the attitude of a people he described as “not mystical.” These are meaningful qualifications, and allow us, I think, to understand an important aspect of the Romanian intellectual’s position. To Paola Pisi we owe an original and useful contribution on the relationship between Eliade and the “traditionalists” (René Guénon, Julius Evola, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy), especially

I riti del costruire, Milano: Jaca Book 1989, translated and with an introduction by Roberto Scagno, and *Il mito della reintegrazione*, Milano: Jaca Book 1989.

³⁵ Eliade, *The Romanians*, 49.

between 1932 and 1945.³⁶ In that essay, the relationship between Eliade and Coomaraswamy is stressed, and Pisi goes as far as to state that “the central part of *Mitul Reintegrării* (1942) is nothing but an abridgement and a popularization, but also a trivialization” of Coomaraswamy’s article “Angel and Titan” published in 1935. In particular, Pisi holds that Eliade trivialized Coomaraswamy’s complex metaphysical view of sacrifice as reintegration (based mainly, but not only, upon Vedic texts), presented in that article and in other writings, by substituting a simpler, psychological reading to his colleague’s ontological (and “mystical”) interpretation. In my opinion, Eliade’s simplification of Coomaraswamy’s metaphysical discourse is the result not of a misunderstanding, but of a deliberate choice, dictated by the Romanian intellectual’s desire to combine his colleague’s sophisticated position with the popular — and political — ideology of sacrifice he had known, and contributed to, during his experience with the Iron Guard. This same intention explains why Eliade transformed Coomaraswamy’s theory of *sacrificial reintegration* in Vedic India into the elementary idea of *creation by sacrifice* that he attributed to ancient Indian religiosity and presented as the combination of a mythical cosmogony by sacrifice with the supposed cosmogonical quality of every sacrificial rite. In this idea, I submit, one can easily recognize the conception of “fruitful sacrifice” he had referred to most emphatically in his *Vremea* article on the heroic death of Ion Motza, published on January 24, 1937.

5. Ernst Jünger, *Peace, and Sacrifice*

In the first volume of his *Fragments d’un journal*, published in 1976 and covering the years 1945–1969, Eliade mentions Ernst Jünger three times.³⁷ In the entry dated February 8, 1953, dedicated to Paule Régnier’s *Journal*, he writes that Gide, Jünger “and the others” write

³⁶ Paola Pisi, “I ‘tradizionalisti’ e la formazione del pensiero di Eliade” (above, n. 31), in particular 53–60.

³⁷ Mircea Eliade, *Fragments d’un journal*, Paris: Gallimard 1973.

their diaries (in Jünger's case, his diaries came out between 1949 and 1955) so that they may one day be published, and thus as books full of "messages." On June 7, 1959, he describes his meeting with Jünger and the Editorial Secretary of *Antaios*, Philippe Wolf, to prepare the second issue of that periodical, co-founded by Eliade and by Jünger in 1957, and (at least officially) co-directed by them from its first issue (1959) to its twelfth and last, dated 1971. On that occasion, he adds, Jünger offered him *Jahre der Okkupation*, the second volume of his diary from the years 1941–1945, when he was a Wehrmacht officer in Paris, on the war front in Caucasus, and elsewhere. On August 2, 1964, discussing the small article he has just begun to prepare for the 1965 issue of *Antaios*, and which he dedicated to Jünger's diaries, *Strahlungen*, he expresses his admiration of the German writer's style, so well exemplified by that text, where short notes taken down during the day, and expanded upon during the night or on the following day, were soon later transformed to shape a more complex, but still laconic and "essential" discourse.

Eliade's interest in Jünger's *Strahlungen*, to which he refers in each of the three passages in his own *Fragments d'un journal* where he mentions the German writer, is striking. The idea that such a text was constructed gradually, by developing notes jotted down during the intellectual's daily activity so as to construct a rich discourse made up of "messages," was important for the Romanian author, who may well have seen Jünger's publication as a model for his own. Surely, the other aspect of Jünger's *Strahlungen*, that of being an apologetic reconstruction of the author's activities and attitudes during the war years (as Carl Schmitt realized immediately, calling it a *Selbstdarstellung*),³⁸ was also important for Eliade, who used his own *Fragments*

³⁸ Carl Schmitt, *Glossarium: Aufzeichnungen der Jahre 1947–1951*, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1991, 99, 129–40, 173–74; see p. 130: "après nous le démontage." An explicit comparison between Schmitt's writings from the years immediately after the Second World War (see the title of his book *Ex Captivitate Salus*, 1950) and Jünger's *Strahlungen* is found on pp. 173–74: "Mein Bruder findet die Captiva Captivitatis

d'un journal to present himself in a favourable light and to erase the memory of his own youthful political errors.

All this is important in order to understand the respective ideological stances of the two intellectuals, who met only during the fifties but had some knowledge of each other's personality and writings already in 1942, through their common friend Carl Schmitt.³⁹ But, in the present context, it is much more meaningful to explore Jünger's treatment of the theme "sacrifice" both in his war diary (as presented in *Strahlungen*, 1949, and in the later volumes and editions published under the same title) and in a small book he allegedly wrote during the Second World War. Jünger's use of the concept was original, and may be compared to the sense given to it by Eliade, both in the Romanian political arena and in wider contexts.

The German writer's treatment of the sacrificial theme in his published diaries is well exemplified by an entry dated April 17, 1945. Discussing the Book of Esther and the millennial destiny of the Jews, he wrote: "It is impossible that such sacrifices (or: such victims) should not give fruits" (*Es ist unmöglich, dass solche Opfer nicht Frucht tragen*).⁴⁰ But fruitful sacrifices are also mentioned in entries dated earlier. For example, under the entry dated August 6, 1943, we find:

The seed from which this war shall draw its fruits is sacrifice (*das Korn, aus dem der Krieg Frucht tragen wird, ist das Opfer*). Next to the sacrifice of the

viel besser und lesenswerter als E. Jünger's 'Strahlungen', weil Jünger eben nicht in Gefangenschaft war. Der *Pour le mérite* hat seine neuen Formen und Kierkegaard hat das alles schon 1848 genug ausgesprochen" (the entry is dated June 29, 1948).

³⁹ On this, see my article "Mircea Eliade, Carl Schmitt, René Guénon, 1942" (n. 29), esp. 328–29. As for the relationship between Eliade and Jünger, a correspondence between the two exists: Jünger's letters to Eliade, in French and in German, are kept in the Regenstein Library Archive in Chicago, while Eliade's letters to Jünger, in French, are kept in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach am Neckar. I thank Florin Turcanu for providing this information (personal communication, October 11, 2004), and I hope to receive a copy of his article in Romanian on this correspondence.

⁴⁰ Ernst Jünger, *Strahlungen II*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta 1995, 415–16 (in the section called *Die Hütte im Weinberg. Jahre der Okkupation*).

soldier, or of the worker (*der Arbeiter*), I must not forget the sacrifice of those innocents who have been slaughtered in a bloodthirsty way and without any reason. The construction of the new world shall be based especially upon them, as it was the case in the past with children walled into bridges.⁴¹

The similarity between Jünger's sacrificial discourse and Eliade's seems rather precise, because to the wide-spread theme of sacrifice bearing fruit, which is common to both authors, we should add a further and more specific theme also mentioned both by the Romanian official and by the German officer: that of the sacrifice of children in order to give life to buildings and allow them to endure. In spite of the similarity, however, it seems hard to reconstruct a historical connection between the respective references to this theme by the two writers: as I have stated above, Eliade published his Romanian volume on Master Manole in 1943, the same year to which Jünger's *Strahlungen* entry refers, but the war, and especially the language, were obvious obstacles for that learned book's diffusion and impact. A shortened French version of that text was available only in 1957, as an article in the periodical *Études Roumaines*.

In the entry dated August 6, 1943, quoted above, Jünger presents the sacrificial theme as a part of the third chapter of a pamphlet he was allegedly planning to write, and to which *Strahlungen* refers rather frequently. That pamphlet (in *Strahlungen*, the author calls it an *Aufruf*, i.e., an "Appeal") is a famous problem in the bibliography of the German "conservative revolutionary." Its title was *Der Friede* (Peace); and, according to what Jünger stated in the 1980 edition,⁴² he started working on it in 1941, circulated it illegally during 1944, and published it in 1945. Its contents reflected the Wehrmacht officer's and

⁴¹ Ibid. 114–16 (in the section called *Das zweite Pariser Tagebuch*).

⁴² *Der Friede* is now available as the fourth essay in Ernst Jünger, *Sämtliche Werke, Zweite Abteilung: Essays*, vol. 7, *Essays I*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta 1980, 195–236. It is dedicated to "Meinem lieben Sohn Ernst Jünger. Geboren 1.5.1926. Gefallen 29.11.1944 bei Carrara." More information on *Der Friede* can be found in Horst Mühleisen, *Bibliographie der Werke Ernst Jüngers, Begründet von Hans-Peter Des Coudres*, Stuttgart: Cotta 1995, 39–41. The complete title of the 1945 edition was: *Der Friede. Ein Wort an die Jugend Europas und an die Jugend der Welt*.

First World War hero's alleged *metanoia*: Jünger's version is that he was horrified by Hitler and that the peace he wished for should be reached "without further violence." That peace should be "consecrated to the future," and "won by all" (that is to say, it should be a peace without winners, and obviously without defeat). According to the generally accepted version of the events of 1944, the circulation of *Der Friede* caused problems for Jünger within the Wehrmacht, and in *Strahlungen* (e.g., in the entries dated March 27, and July 21–24, 1944) the German writer describes himself as a friend and admirer of some of the conspirators who attempted to kill Hitler on July 20.⁴³

Jünger's *Friede* was presented as based upon the fruitful sacrifice of all the war victims, and especially of the "innocent" victims, among them the Jews, often mentioned, and precisely as victims, in that author's published diaries, but never explicitly referred to in the *Aufruf*. In *Strahlungen*, already under the date September 19, 1943, we read that the first part of the *Aufruf* that would become *Der Friede* bore the title *Das Opfer*, and that its contents could be expressed by Thesis 44 of Spinoza's *Ethics*: "The hate that is totally defeated by love becomes love; and the resulting love is stronger than it could ever be if it had not originally been hate." This interpretation of the relationship between sacrifice and peace is based upon the idea that sacrifice is the price of peace, and that peace is ransomed, or rather redeemed, by sacrifice. By implication, the wilful self-offering of victims surrendering their lives to gain victory for their own side is valuable only insofar as their death is held to be an unwilling tribute to peace, and, as Jünger explicitly states in the August 5, 1943, entry in *Strahlungen*, quoted above, the greatest value is actually attributed to the sacrifice of unknowing innocents.

If we compare Jünger's sacrificial discourse in *Strahlungen* and in *Der Friede* to Eliade's writings on sacrifice between 1937 and 1943, we are confronted with two different treatments of the two themes I have attempted to identify in the Romanian intellectual's production: the *war context* and the *self-offering of the victim*. In Eliade's *Iphigenia*,

⁴³ Jünger, *Strahlungen II*, 284–92 (the entries dated from July 20 to August 1, 1944).

just as in his articles on the sacrifice of the Iron Guard, both themes were central. In the book he published in Lisbon and Madrid in 1943, one of the two “myths of Romanian spirituality” (*Mioritza*) contained both themes, conflict and the will to perish, while the other, the *Legend of Master Manole*, featured neither, but insisted on the sacrifice of an innocent baby to “give life” to a church. Jünger’s discourse in the texts I am discussing here combined the *war* theme with sacrifice, while attributing great value to specific cases in which *wilful self-offering is absent*, and comparing the most valuable sacrifices to the death of “children walled into bridges.” This paradoxical combination, recently discussed by Marcus Paul Bullock,⁴⁴ was dictated by the more general paradox of *peace* founded upon, and liberated by, *the death of war victims*, or, in other words, of sacrifice for victory replaced by — and in some cases “used” by — sacrifice for a peace without victory and without defeat.

The sacrificial discourse we find in *Strahlungen* and in *Der Friede* differs greatly not only from Eliade’s, but also from Jünger’s own discourse in his previous writings, mostly based upon the rhetoric of heroism and hardship in the trenches of the Great War.⁴⁵ Very clearly,

⁴⁴ Marcus Paul Bullock, *The Violent Eye: Ernst Jünger’s Visions and Revisions on the European Right*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1992, 158–59, notices the contradictions in the list of victims we find in *Der Friede*, and in particular the survival of the term *Arbeiter*, a key word of Jünger’s pre-war production and the title of his book of 1932. Bullock comments upon “the split we can see in the way in which he (Jünger) uses the term *Arbeiter* towards the end of the war. On the Caucasian front, he ascribed all the abuse of human lives and human bodies the conflict has produced to the fact that the struggle was between *Arbeiter* on both sides. Yet in the published version of *Der Friede*, composed later, when events had imposed this view yet more forcibly, he continued to give a positive, constructive role to elements described with the same term. The contradiction is to be sought less in what he found through his observations of the world than in his attitude toward himself and his own positions. The fascination exerted by this term that he devised and identified now clearly generates a major stumbling block to the advance of his own understanding.”

⁴⁵ On Jünger’s war discourse, Bullock’s discussion should be supplemented with Ferruccio Masini, “La guerra come *nomos* della catastrofe in Ernst Jünger,” in Ferruccio Masini (ed.), *Ideologia della guerra*, Naples: Bibliopolis 1987, 60–76.

this original treatment of sacrificial death as a way to redemption and *as a guarantee for a peace without victory*, with the connected “mixture” of fighting victims and innocent victims, is totally new. On the other hand, though Jünger’s musings on the First World War were rightly famous classical examples of male bellicosity, his view of the relationship between the intentions and values of the brave fighters he praised and the scope and meaning of the conflict they were engaged in justifies the usual definition of the German writer’s first production as a *heroic nihilism*. This view is best expressed in this passage of *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, 1922, in which the young Lieutenant Ernst Jünger, in charge of a platoon of storm troopers, describes the men under his command, as they engage in “endless discussions about the war”:

They will never find the solution, for even the way they put their questions is wrong. They take the war to be, not an expression but a cause, and in this way they are hoping to find outside what is only to be found within. However, one must understand them. They are materialists through and through, and I, who have lived among them for years, hear this in every word they say. They are really material, the material which, without their knowing it, the Idea is consuming in order to reach its great aims.⁴⁶

These brave soldiers, who know nothing of the real meaning of the murderous battles they are fighting, and are described as matter consumed by the Idea, are clearly a premonition not only of *der Soldat*, *der Arbeiter*, killed in the Second World War, but also, and in a way even more clearly, of the victims Jünger listed after them in the *Strahlungen* entry dated August 6, 1943, the *unschuldig Leidenden* who were slaughtered without any reason, compared by the German author to children walled into bridges (*eingemauerten Kindern*). Only the function of such victims (the soldiers, the workmen, and the unknowing innocents) is new: peace is now the “fruit” (*Frucht*) of the sacrifice (*Opfer*).

⁴⁶ Quoted in J.P. Stern, *Hitler* (above, n. 22), 183.

6. *Fruitful Death: Eliade, Jünger and Maybaum*

The transformation attested by *Strahlungen* and by *Der Friede* is thus a meaningful change in Jünger's discourse. It is not important here to discuss the nature of that change; it may even be correct to state that, as Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno once wrote to Thomas Mann, Jünger started out as a second-rate kitsch writer and later became a second-hand Stephan George, decked in bronze foliage.⁴⁷ In the present context, it is more important to compare Jünger's paradoxical use of the theme of human sacrifice to Eliade's more traditional positions in his play *Iphigenia*, and to the Romanian's discussion of the *Master Manole* ballad and the *Mioritza* tradition.

The comparison could well take the form of answers to three questions, some of which have already been asked in different ways in previous parts of this article. First of all, we should ask: whose blood is shed in sacrifice in the various texts? Second: is the sacrifice in question a self-offering? And, third, what is the "fruit" of the sacrifice? As for Eliade's treatment of the theme, it is easy to answer all questions: in the play *Iphigenia* it is the daughter of the king who is sacrificed, so that the Achaean army can go to war, and, in the two Romanian myths, Eliade insists in his Portuguese book of 1943, Romanian blood is shed; in the play, the heroine accepts, indeed, desires, her own sacrificial death, in the *Mioritza* tradition, the pastoral hero "does not run away, but accepts death" and even describes it to his mother as a wedding, while the baby sacrificed in the *Master Manole* may not be consulted; as for the "fruit," it is victory in *Iphigenia* (or rather the condition for victory, the possibility of waging war), in *Mioritza* the sacral overcoming of death, and in *Master Manole* the stability of a sacred building. As for Jünger's sacrificial discourse in *Strahlungen* and in *Der Friede*, the blood that "gives fruit" is the blood of "soldiers and workers" on both sides, and the

⁴⁷ Christof Gödde and Thomas Sprecher (eds.), *Theodor W. Adorno, Thomas Mann, Briefwechsel 1943–1955*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 2002, 47–49.

blood of innocent victims killed “without any reason”; symmetrically, some of the victims are willing, though they offer themselves for values that are not the peace Jünger aspires to, and others are unknowing; and finally, peace without victory is the “fruit” born from that blood. In different ways, Eliade and Jünger offer a rich sacrificial discourse, that is worthy of the age of havoc and terror Europe was going through while they produced it.

Elsewhere, I have gone as far as to present Jünger as a paradoxical forerunner of that specific variety of the Holocaust theme that is most faithful to the sacrificial meaning of the term.⁴⁸ Here, more modestly, I wish to draw the reader’s attention both to the resemblance and to the difference between the German intellectual’s discussion of the redemptive value of the death of the Second World War victims, and specifically of the Jewish victims, and the idea of the *Shoah* as a vicarious and expiatory sacrifice. According to Anna-Vera Sullam Calimani, the first use of the term *Holocaust* to indicate the destruction of the Jews by the National Socialist regime goes back to 1942. If the dates given by the German writer to his pamphlet *Der Friede* are correct, he started preparing it one year before the term was first used in that sense, and circulated it illegally three years later. It would appear that, shortly after the present use of the term *Holocaust* first appeared, but four years before the war ended, and surely some time before he acquired complete information about the regime’s crimes, Ernst Jünger suggested a sacrificial reading of the war massacres, including, or, rather, implicitly giving pride of place, to the mass killing of Jews.

A direct comparison between Jünger’s reading of the Second World War massacre of the European Jews and the reflections of Rabbi Ignaz Maybaum is particularly suggestive. In his book *The Face of God after Auschwitz*, Maybaum wrote:

⁴⁸ Grottanelli, *Il sacrificio*, 104–7. On the sacrificial quality of the term *Holocaust* see now especially Sullam Calimani, *I nomi dello sterminio* (above, n. 22), 77–112.

We live now in the post-Auschwitz era and look back to the *ante* Auschwitz era. It was, what Amos calls, 'The day of the Lord', which created the division into a condemned past and into a new era. . . . The six million who died innocently, died because no man is an island, because everyone is responsible for everyone else. The innocent who died in Auschwitz, not for the sake of their own sins, but because of the sins of others, atone for evil and are the sacrifice which is brought to the altar and which God acknowledges favourably. The six million, the dead of Auschwitz and of other places of horror, are Jews whom our modern civilization has to canonize as holy martyrs; they died as sacrificial lambs because of the sins inherent in Western civilization. Their death purified Western civilization so that it can again become a place where man can live, do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.⁴⁹

Though many essential traits of the sacrificial discourse of Jünger and Maybaum are similar, the differences are just as striking, and in particular one notes immediately that Maybaum's language is more specifically religious: purification, atonement, canonization, holy martyrs, sacrificial lambs, God's favourable acknowledgement of the sacrifice, walking humbly with God, are all more or less technical terms or expressions of the specific *techne* this journal specializes in, and in particular of the Judeo-Christian species of such a *techne*. Indeed, as some Jewish critics of Maybaum's theories have suggested, some of these concepts are interpreted and used in a way that is more Christian than Jewish.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ignaz Maybaum, *The Face of God after Auschwitz*, Amsterdam: Polack and Van Gennep 1965, 83–84.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Steven T. Katz, *Post-Holocaust Dialogues: Critical Studies in Modern Jewish Thought*, New York: New York University Press 1983, 252–53. This criticism is indirectly strengthened by the contents of a famous Catholic view of the Holocaust: François Mauriac, "Un enfant juif," *Le Figaro Littéraire*, July 7, 1958, p. 1, and Idem, "Préface," to Elie Wiesel, *La nuit*, Paris: Éditions de Minuit 1958. In an interview published in 1985, Elie Wiesel stated that in Mauriac's article, which described his first meeting with Wiesel and later became a preface to his French book, "there are some Christological overtones . . . which I don't like." On Mauriac and the *Shoah*, see Sullam Calimani, *I nomi dello sterminio*, 81–82 and 91.

Secondly, while Jünger's point is precisely that, although the innocent victims are the most fruitful, *all* victims of the Second World War are fruitful victims, Maybaum insists upon the innocence and the Jewish quality of the victims. Both describe the general value and the wide beneficial consequences of the sacrifice: its fruit is peace without a winning side for Jünger, and the purification of the Western civilization for Maybaum.

The comparison between Maybaum's and Jünger's positions encourages me to put Carl Schmitt's, Marcus Paul Bullock's, and my own, suspicious reading of *Strahlungen* aside for a moment, and to go back to my comparison between the sacrificial ideologies of Eliade and Jünger with a new, and concluding, question. Could we envisage the German writer's sacrificial discourse, whatever its intention and context, as a theoretical mediation, and as a typological transition, between Eliade's nationalistic positions and the broader dimension of the reflection on the *Shoah*?

In my opinion, there are several reasons for giving a negative answer to this question. I shall thus conclude by mentioning only two such reasons. The first is the *cosmic* quality of sacrifice in Eliade's writings, a quality that was always important, but became even more so after the war, and gradually — but never totally — “covered” the nationalistic aspects of his discourse. The second is the presence of *sacrificial*, or at least of *sacral*, dimensions in that Israeli discourse on the *Shoah* that was well defined by Saul Friedländer in his article *Die Shoah als Element in der Konstruktion israelischer Erinnerung* (1987).⁵¹ Of such dimensions I quote one trace, that appears in the

⁵¹ Saul Friedländer, “Die Shoah als Element in der Konstruktion israelischer Erinnerung,” *Babylon* 2 (1987) 4–16. On this type of *Shoah* memory, see David Bidussa, “Introduzione,” in David Bidussa (ed.), *Ebrei moderni: Identità e stereotipi culturali*, Torino: Bollati Boringhieri 1989, 20–23; Dalia Ofer, “Linguistic Conceptualization of the Holocaust in Palestine and Israel 1942–1953,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 31 (1996) 567–95; and Sullam Calimani, *I nomi dello sterminio*, 91–94.

statement by the Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer, who wrote in 1978: “Holocaust was the policy of the total, *sacral* Nazi act of mass murder of all the Jews they could lay hands on.”⁵² The italics are mine.⁵³

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⁵² Yehuda Bauer, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective*, Seattle: University of Washington Press 1978, 36.

⁵³ I thank Florin Turcanu, who read and corrected this article (November 2004).

BOOK REVIEWS

JEPPE SINDING JENSEN, *The Study of Religion in a New Key: Theoretical and Philosophical Soundings in the Comparative and General Study of Religion* — Aarhus: Aarhus University Press 2003 (509 p.) ISBN 87-7934-091-1 (pbk.) DKK398.00.

Despite the fact that some scholars during the last fifteen years have tried to somehow revitalise ‘phenomenology’ — now under the rubric of ‘neo-phenomenology’ or ‘new comparativism’ — there can be no doubt that the majority of scholars in the academic study of religion today respond to such an attempt with various forms of scepticism. In his courageous doctoral thesis, Jeppe Sinding Jensen, without bothering too much about political correctness, uncovers the hidden agendas of both sides of this debate and intends to break new ground for a study of religion that is both self-critical and openly normative. He argues that “the ‘post-phenomenology of religion’ could be construed as a radically critical version — one that questions and cuts right through the mass of tacit presuppositions, ‘received wisdom’ and other items best discarded. Yet our basic intention must not be lost: to install a theoretically oriented comparative and general perspective in the study of religion” (p. 9).

In the first part of his study, modestly entitled “Preliminaries,” Jensen discusses the basic questions and the history of phenomenological approaches to religion. He does not subscribe to the claim that scholars should abolish the term ‘phenomenology’ and argues that comparison is the ‘unavoidable condition’ of religious studies. The question is, rather, how scholars arrive at a comparative method that does not essentialise or ontologise the variables of comparison. The book’s second part — “Foundations” — makes clear how the author wants to establish this comparative system of interpretation. He persuasively argues that the strongest arguments in this methodological debate come from contemporary philosophy. Jensen explains the epistemological issues at stake in the discussion between ‘realistic’ positions on the one hand and pragmatic, hermeneutical, or ‘relativist’ positions on the other. He makes

extensive use of the philosophy of Donald Davidson and Richard Rorty — two authors who, despite their enormous importance for contemporary debates, are not given the attention they deserve, at least by European scholars of religion. Why Jensen does not also engage Robert Brandom is unclear to me, however, since Brandom offers fruitful insights into the complex relationship between ontologies, normativities, conceptual schemes, truth, language, and epistemology. But even without reference to Brandom, Jensen is right to argue that in our handling of these difficult concepts, the methodological future of the academic study of religion will be decided.

On his way to establish a ‘new key’ for religious studies — thus harking back to Susanne K. Langer’s notion of “philosophy in a new key” — Jensen adopts a sober pragmatic attitude: being normative is inescapable, reductionism is a *sine qua non* for any academic interpretation, definitions are “the shortest possible versions of theories” (p. 63) and have to be established *deductively*, ethnocentrism may be a problem for ethics but not for a pragmatic epistemology, and so on. All these theoretical arguments the author applies to his basic objective, to establish a study of religion that “shifts the attention from metaphysical ‘givens’ and psychological experiences to the social, symbolic and linguistic constructions of human habitats. The phenomenology of religion in a ‘new key’ investigates a certain range of socio-cultural phenomena, called ‘religious,’ that range from the cognitive to the cultural” (p. 13). Part III — “Consequences” — briefly summarises Jensen’s basic ideas about the “possibility of the ‘science of comparative religion,’” integrating the scholar as an actor in the game of religion as a “(non-trivial) social phenomenon,” and suggesting a catalogue of possible lines of comparability within the study of religion.

Most of the arguments developed in *The Study of Religion in a New Key* are persuasive and balanced, clearly presented, and show the author’s deep acquaintance with contemporary philosophy and science. Whether or not we want to label this methodology a ‘new phenomenology,’ and whether or not Jensen’s arguments are indeed ‘new’ (cf. his careful remarks on p. 14), this book is an important assessment of the state of the art in a sophisticated study of religion and breaks fresh ground for future research.

This very positive impression notwithstanding, there remain significant questions and problems that have to be addressed. Let me indicate two of them. Because Jensen develops a meta-theoretical framework of analysis

that explains the formation of concepts and the construction of definitions, he is very vague when it comes to concrete definitions of religion or, at least, to an explicit indication of what our objects of study are. When the author says that “the term religion refers to a more or less integrated and architectural design of mind and meaning, one in which various ‘spaces’ and functions relate to action and thought,” the reader wonders how this should be put into practice. The next sentence gives no clarification: “Without claiming that religion is a seamless system — for it is not — there is nevertheless some level of intra-organic discursive systematicity” (p. 420). Even though Jensen fully acknowledges the “problem of adequate description [that] is visible here” (note 16 on p. 421), this description of the field of religion does not answer the question of many critics what, then, *distinguishes* ‘religion’ from other ‘designs of mind and meaning’ or from other ‘human habitats’ and socio-cognitive activities? Does the fact that it is “possible to construct analytic definitions of anything, also of religion, but [that] such a definition would be free-floating and useless, as quite a number of definitions of religion in fact have been and still are” (p. 342), automatically mean that scholars of religion do not have to be explicit about their (heuristic) attempts to structure the world around them?

A second problem is related to the very project of comparison. Making use of Davidson’s arguments about the ‘translatability’ of conceptual schemes (and the ‘principle of charity’ involved here, see p. 369), Jensen argues that “if religions are schemes, they may be *very different*, but they are not ‘alternative’, because it is my firm contention — and the whole essence of my theoretical argument — that religions are ‘translatable’” (note 53 on p. 343). I am inclined to agree with this, but at the same time I am afraid that from this perspective it will be difficult to rule out the possibility that — in a colonial, ethnocentric, or even solipsistic way — we simply *impose* our conceptual schemes on other cultures. Epistemological notions about the inescapability of ethnocentrism do not solve issues of what can be called the ‘ethics of comparison.’ But for an attempt to establish a ‘new comparativism,’ these difficulties must be addressed.

To point out questions and problems that follow from Jensen’s argument does not mean to dismiss his analytical framework as inconsistent. Quite the contrary: it is a characteristic of good books that their arguments are clear and reflective enough to stimulate a detailed and fruitful debate. They do not solve all problems but they formulate questions in a better vocabulary.

In this sense, Jeppe Sinding Jensen has written an important and thought-provoking contribution to methodological discussions in the academic study of religion.

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D. JASON SLONE, *Theological Incorrectness. Why Religious People Believe What They Shouldn't* — Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004 (156 p.) ISBN 0-19-516926-3 €23.50.

In this book, Jason Slone raises a question puzzling most students of religion, namely “. . . why do people believe things they shouldn't according to the tenets of their own beliefs?” (p. 4) Slone is mainly interested in that question as an illustration of his more general assumption that “the ideas that one learns in one's given culture, such as theological ideas, play only a partial role in what people actually think and do. This book offers an explanation for how and why” (p. 4). The underlying idea is that one learns theologically correct notions, while the incorrect ones may simply crop up directly from the depths of the human mind. This is why Slone finds that the picture drawn by ‘socio-culturalists,’ namely that religion is learned in processes of socialisation, is insufficient. However, I feel that it will remain a matter of debate (and both further empirical and theoretical scrutiny) whether those ideas that people do have while they shouldn't (according to the tenets of their religion), such as, e.g., a belief in ‘luck’ despite their adherence to monotheistic religions (with their omnipotent and omnipresent deities), are not equally learned by these people in their given culture or if they, as Slone suggests, emerge right out of the mind.

The explanations Slone promises are informed by the increasingly influential cognitive approach to the study of religion, and some of the main protagonists of this approach — Pascal Boyer, E. Thomas Lawson (his PhD-supervisor), Harvey Whitehouse, and Luther H. Martin — have given their benediction to Slone's book by writing enthusiastic endorsements that

are proudly displayed on the back of the book. Apart from these authors, Slone is inspired by Justin Barrett and his researches into the limits of 'theological correctness' in situations when people are required to rapidly ('online') resolve conceptual problems. Unfortunately, only less than half of the slim volume (125 pages of text, plus bibliography and index, no notes) is actually devoted to the problem it is supposed to 'explain.'

In the first three chapters, Slone reviews main paradigms in the study of religion. This very brief account is hardly original. Its main purpose evidently is the usual rewriting of scholarly history in order to provide legitimacy to the paradigm adhered to by the respective author. Accordingly, contrary to the first chapters, the section on the cognitive approach lacks any critical stance. It merely lists the achievements of the main protagonists whose theories the authors sets out to apply in the subsequent chapters of the book to "some recurring and enigmatic case studies from world religions" (p. 5).

Let us take a very brief look at some of these problems and the explanations provided by the author. The first case study deals with the 'non-theistic' character of Theravada Buddhism and the theological incorrectness of those Buddhists treating the Buddha as a superhuman agent. It turns out, however, that the problem Slone wants to explain is like the windmills Don Quixote found himself fighting against, because the theological norms Buddhist are reportedly violating against were merely an invention of 19th century Buddhist modernists. And with the explanandum, also the explanation loses much of its interest. (The chapter also discusses some further problems pertaining to Theravada Buddhism.)

The second case study is taken from North American religious history. Here, Slone offers an 'explanation' of the transformation of the English Colonies in America "from a Puritanical Calvinist society based on the combined belief in divine sovereignty (and thus 'predestination') to an Arminianist society based on the combined belief in divine sovereignty and in free will" (p. 5). This is "because Calvinist theology was too cognitively burdensome to be employed online [= in a rapid, pre-reflective way (MSt.)] or to be maintained over the long run" (p. 100). Seen from this angle, the predictable replacement of Puritanism by Arminianism (a form of theology that Slone holds to be closer to "natural" cognitive processes) was just a matter of time. Even if one would agree with the underlying view that regards religions essentially as a bundle of doctrines (and religious change basically a replacement of religious ideas), for a historian the interesting questions would rather

be why this replacement happened at a particular time (the Great Awakening), why such a cognitively suboptimal form of religions as Puritanism came into being at all in the first place (and was pretty successful), and why it is still alive, albeit as a minority. Unfortunately, Slone does not address these issues.

In the sixth chapter, Slone discusses cross-culturally widespread notions of 'luck' that he, from a cognitive point of view, finds to be "more efficient than theologically correct postulations" (p. 108). Notions of 'luck' are held to be theologically incorrect because they implicitly deny the idea that super-human agents are in control. While theologies proceed deductively, notions of 'luck' operate abductively, producing faster and broader results. Slone provides several general psychological reasons why "we" are naturally prone to ideas about luck, which turn out to be "a natural by-product of human cognition" (p. 120), just as religion. As stimulating as this reasoning may be, it clearly suffers from the 'intuitive' way Slone deals with the problem. Instead of sweeping general statements ("Humans simply are control freaks" [p. 118]; "Once the cause of luck is postulated, we naturally feel that we can influence that cause" [p. 120]), this reviewer would have expected a closer attention to the empirical material at hand. Slone's arguments operate within a historical vacuum.

The book is pretty 'American' in style. Brief sentences. Readable. Funny. And lots of examples from everyday-life. Slone's book is certainly challenging, but despite its many interesting insights derived from the canon of cognitive writings on religion, on the whole, I am afraid to say, it is a missed opportunity. One of the (several) reasons why many scholars (still) tend to be critical towards the cognitive paradigm is that they feel that it doesn't help them to do something with their data. Slone could have shown us how that can work out. But precisely the chapters of the book actually dealing with historical data are far too apodictic and sketchy to be compelling. Unfortunately, Slone does not resist the temptation to draw a caricature of his enemies, and occasionally, this tendency falls back on his own reasoning. Ultimately, the book amply illustrates that we need to pay closer attention to the complex interrelations between both cognition and culture and cognition and history.

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ANCIENT AVALON, NEW JERUSALEM, HEART CHAKRA OF PLANET EARTH: THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL IN GLASTONBURY¹

MARION I. BOWMAN

Summary

Glastonbury, a small town in the south west of England, is the focus for a variety of spiritual seekers and religious practitioners. It therefore provides an interesting and appropriate context in which to explore the relationship between the local and the global in the contemporary spiritual milieu.

This article explores the extent to which Glastonbury has claimed a “serial centrality” over the centuries in relation to different religious trends, first within Christianity and, in the course of the twentieth century, within a growing number of worldviews.

Highlighting similarities and tensions between the competing visions and discourses to be found there, the article examines issues surrounding the negotiation of the local and the global for a variety of groups and individuals.

Despite the element of change (indeed exoticism) in some of the manifestations of contemporary spirituality in Glastonbury, there is, nevertheless, a considerable degree of continuity in relation to the vernacular tradition there.

Introduction

The idea that the world is “a single place” is actively articulated within many aspects of contemporary religion in Glastonbury, a small town in the south west of England which attracts an immense variety of spiritual seekers. It therefore provides a fruitful location in which to examine the local in the context of the global, and the global in the context of the local. In this article I look at various ways in which the local and global are perceived to interact there,

¹ This article is based on the Keynote Lecture of the same name given at the EASR conference on The Local and the Global, University of Bergen, 2003.

some of the issues raised and exemplified by this interaction, and the extent to which there is both continuity and change in how Glastonbury has been and continues to be centrally and significantly located in relation to a variety of worldviews.

Adopting an ethnological approach, which Kockel (2003) claims is “particularly suited to studying local-level interpretations and negotiations of global processes,” I have conducted fieldwork in Glastonbury on a variety of phenomena since 1991 (e.g., Bowman 1993a, 1993b, 2000). Accordingly, much of the information for this article has been gathered through formal interviews, participant observation and informal conversations.² Many of the claims reported here about Glastonbury’s past and its present significance have the status of “common knowledge” or “received wisdom,” by which I mean that they are now so embedded in the oral tradition of various groups and individuals in Glastonbury that they tend to be stated as uncontested fact. In addition, there are books (such as *Glastonbury: Maker of Myths* by long term Glastonbury resident Francis Howard-Gordon), magazine articles and websites which assume, repeat or support this “common knowledge.” Occasionally people will reference assertions back to characters influential in Glastonbury in the 20th century, such as Frederick Bligh Bond, Dion Fortune, Wellesley Tudor Pole and Katharine Maltwood (see Benham 1993), or modern writers including Geoffrey Ashe, John Michell and Kathy Jones. For the most part, though, the varied statements made about Glastonbury’s past and present, its connections with a variety of myths, and its local and global significance tend to be presented as unassailable or self-evident fact, for which more conventionally recognised proof is not deemed necessary.³ As

² When no specific reference is given for a quotation, it comes from fieldwork tapes or notes. I am grateful to all who have given me the benefit of their time, knowledge, experiences, insights and company.

³ On one occasion I asked about evidence relating to the Druidic university which many claim existed in Glastonbury. The person to whom I was speaking

will become clear, the making of extravagant but largely unauthenticated claims for Glastonbury's status is not a new phenomenon.

Locating Glastonbury

In conventional terms, Glastonbury is a small town (population c8500) in rural Somerset, in the south west of England. However, some consider Glastonbury to be the point where the veil between this world and the "other world" is at its thinnest. It exerts an attraction for a variety of spiritual seekers and scholars on account of the many myths that surround it and the myriad claims made for it (Bowman 1993a, 2000; Ivakhiv 2001). In effect, Glastonbury is not one place but many; it is a place of parallel pasts and presents. Normally we might think of the history of a place in terms of "stacking," a vertical structure whereby one layer rests on and to some extent obliterates the previous layer. In Glastonbury, while there is a popularly perceived chronology of events (patriarchy replacing matriarchy, Christianity replacing Paganism), there is also a horizontal structure of simultaneity whereby different pasts are being revived to take their place in the present, at the same time in the same location. Sometimes complementing, frequently interacting, and on occasion competing with each other (see Ivakhiv 2001; Bowman 2004), these parallel universes provide case-studies of how the local and the global are (re)interpreted and (re)negotiated in this context.

In popularly accepted chronological order, some believe that Glastonbury was a significant prehistoric centre of Goddess worship, confirmed for present-day devotees by figures of the Goddess they discern in the landscape and the existence in the Christian era of strong devotion to St. Bridget,⁴ widely regarded in some circles

replied "You mean, *observable* phenomena?" in a tone which made it clear that I had asked a rather stupid question.

⁴ St. Brigid was a 6th century Irish saint, foundress of a celebrated convent at

as a Christianised form of the Goddess. (Glastonbury resident and author Kathy Jones asserts, "Where we find St. Bridget we know that the goddess Bridie was once honoured" [2000:16]). For others, Glastonbury's significance lies in the claim that it was the site of a great Druidic university, a centre of learning to which people flocked from all over Europe and beyond. There are those who claim that in Glastonbury the Druids had anticipated the coming of Christianity, and that here the transition from the old religion to the new was smooth; indeed, there is even speculation that Jesus himself attended the Druidic university.

Beyond the prehistoric period, Glastonbury's Christian history is contested (see Carley 1996) and has relied heavily on folk religion, which is defined by folklorist Don Yoder as "the totality of all those views and practices of religion that exist among the people apart from and alongside the strictly theological and liturgical forms of the official religion" (1974:14). For many Christians, past and present, Glastonbury's status has rested on it being the "cradle of English Christianity," the point at which Christianity took root in England, allegedly brought there by Joseph of Arimathea (the person who provided a tomb for Christ after the crucifixion) who established the first Christian church in the British Isles in Glastonbury. It is claimed that Joseph arrived in Glastonbury after the crucifixion with a staff which he thrust into the ground on arrival at Wearyall Hill; this took root and became the Glastonbury thorn, which flowers twice a year, in spring and around Christmas. (Each year this legend is celebrated in the Holy Thorn Ceremony held at the Anglican St John's Church, attended by local schoolchildren, and a sprig of the Christmas flowering thorn is sent to the Queen.) Joseph is also reputed to have brought the chalice used at the Last Supper, the Grail, although in some versions of the legend he brought containers holding the blood (and possibly the sweat) of Christ.

Cill Dara (Kildare), Ireland. The saint's name in modern Irish is Brid, and in anglicised form appears as Bride, Brigit or Bridget.

Even more significantly, many believe that Jesus himself came to Glastonbury with St. Joseph, and furthermore that he may have spent some time living there before he commenced his ministry (see Bowman 2003–2004). The words of the 18th century poet and visionary William Blake,

And did those feet in ancient times
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the Holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

are widely thought to express this belief. More recently (though rather less well known), Van Morrison's "Summertime in England" contains the line "Did you ever hear about Jesus walkin', Jesus walkin' down by Avalon?," demonstrating the continuing currency of this idea.

Traditionally — though questionably — connected with Celtic saints such as Patrick, Bridget, Columba, and David (see Carley 1996:99–112), there are those who regard Glastonbury as a bastion of Celtic Christianity, suggesting that here was a more nature-oriented, egalitarian, spiritually intuitive form of Christianity than the Roman version later "imposed." Some claim this was because of the insights and esoteric knowledge incorporated from Druids who became Christians.

Glastonbury has also been identified with the Isle of Avalon, the place where in Arthurian legend King Arthur was taken for healing after his last battle, and where some believe he lies sleeping, waiting to return at some time of great national emergency. The connection between Joseph and Arimathea and the Grail, and the centrality of the quest for the Holy Grail in Arthurian legend are seen as significant, while the fortuitous 12th century "discovery" of the body of Arthur in the grounds of Glastonbury Abbey seemed to confirm the popular association between Arthur, Glastonbury, and Avalon. Many feel that this connection has been reinforced with the 1920's "rediscovery" by artist and sculptor Katharine Maltwood of the Glastonbury Zodiac, a huge planisphere 10 miles in diameter



Figure 1. The annual Anglican Glastonbury Pilgrimage to “the cradle of English Christianity.” (Photo: Marion Bowman)

in the landscape around Glastonbury, hailed as the original Round Table of Arthurian myth (see Maltwood 1964).

By the Middle Ages Glastonbury Abbey was a major pilgrimage centre, boasting a huge collection of relics and a fine library; the Abbey's Lady Chapel was allegedly built on the site of Joseph's original church. The Abbey was brutally suppressed at the time of the Reformation, and fell into ruins. However, there is a tradition that Austin Ringwode, last of the Glastonbury monks, made the deathbed prophecy that "The Abbey will one day be repaired and rebuilt for the like worship which has ceased; and then peace and plenty will for a long time abound" (Ashe 1957:362). Some feel that if the Abbey could be rebuilt, it would restore not only the spiritual wellbeing of the nation but "Britain's greatness."

From the late 19th and early 20th centuries, influences from the Celtic revival, Theosophy and esotericism were felt in Glastonbury (Benham 1993), and from the 1970's it gained a media reputation as a centre for "hippies," "New Age Travellers," and people seeking alternative lifestyles and spiritual experiences. Regarded as the epicentre of New Age in England, some see Glastonbury's significance in terms of leylines, as a node where leylines converge, a centre of earth energies. In global terms, Glastonbury is regarded as the "heart chakra" of planet earth, or as one informant put it, "the beginning of where the spiritual energy comes into the physical plane." In the wake of numerous reports of UFO sightings and crop circles in the area, some feel that it is also an important communication point for extra-terrestrial contact.

Serial Centrality

From this brief sketch of perceptions of Glastonbury among different spiritual seekers, one thing becomes very clear: whatever the prevailing myth or worldview, Glastonbury somehow claims a central place in it. Glastonbury was a major centre of devotion to the Goddess in the British Isles, it is claimed. There is not just the assertion that there were Druids in Glastonbury; Glastonbury was

the great British (even European) Druidic centre of learning. The Christian church at Glastonbury was *the* original, the first church in England; the founder of Christianity, Christ himself, came to Glastonbury. Some of the most significant figures of the Celtic Church (such as Patrick, Bridget, David and Columba) are said to have had Glastonbury connections. In the context of Arthurian legend, Glastonbury is Avalon and Arthur himself is here. In terms of English nationalism, the nation's greatness can be restored by rebuilding the Abbey in Glastonbury, and as some believe not only that Christ came here during his lifetime, but that he will return to Glastonbury, Glastonbury's central position seems assured for the future.

It comes as no surprise, then, that in the context of highly globalised contemporary spirituality, Glastonbury is not just on one ley-line, but at the significant convergence of a number of them; it is "heart chakra" of planet earth. The claims simply get bigger as the world and worldviews expand. Glastonbury has consistently localised the global and globalised the local, locating itself in a prominent position, pulling in and projecting out significance. Of course that has happened elsewhere, but this "hyperlocalisation" seems particularly marked in Glastonbury at present. For while at one level the world may be a single place, currently Glastonbury is the centre of a number of worlds, because of the way Glastonbury functions as a multiple choice or multivalent location. Just as in Britain there are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which are prized and protected for either the rarity or the diversity of the flora and fauna found there, there may well be an argument for declaring Glastonbury an alternative SSSI (Site of Special Spiritual Interest) on similar grounds.

Locating Vernacular Religion and Contemporary Spirituality

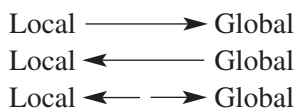
Leonard Primiano (1995:44) defines vernacular religion as "religion as it is lived: as humans encounter, understand, interpret and practice it." To study it requires "an interdisciplinary approach to

the study of the religious lives of individuals with special attention to the process of religious belief, the verbal, behavioural, and material expressions of religious belief, and the ultimate object of religious belief” (Primiano 1995:44). That is, the focus is on what people actually believe, how they actually behave, and how this is expressed in everyday life rather than on some idealised notion of what they should be believing or doing. This is a context in which cultural tradition, informal transmission and personal experience of efficacy are likely to be as important as authoritative texts or religious professionals. This is undoubtedly the case in Glastonbury, and any downplaying of this aspect would lead to an incomplete understanding of ideas and events there.

More generally, if we are thinking about the negotiation of the global and the local within religion, both past and present, it is imperative to take into account vernacular religion, for vernacular religion is very much about locating religion in everyday life, about rooting religion not just in different cultural contexts but in myriad physical locations. This is something that religions have traditionally done in a variety of ways. When the Romans reached Bath in south west England, for example, the hot springs became dedicated to the hybrid deity Sulis Minerva, a combination of the Roman Goddess of wisdom and healing Minerva, and the Celtic deity Sul — a good example of localising the global, and globalising the local. Meanwhile, for Christmas 2002 there was a self-consciously Venetian nativity scene in St. Mark’s Square, with the Holy Family in a gondola, being visited not by shepherds and wise men, but by gondoliers and doges.

But localisation has been inherent in the spread of global religions, far beyond the simple addition of cultural trimmings. Catholic churches around the world contain the Stations of the Cross which, especially on Good Friday, are not just reproducing, but re-locating the Via Dolorosa, so that people can join Jesus on that last journey in Jerusalem. Likewise, in the wake of the apparition of Our Lady to Bernadette in a grotto outside the old town of

Lourdes in 1858, Lourdes Grottoes began to be replicated in churches in Europe, America and elsewhere. These were frequently built by priests or parishioners who had had the experience of visiting Lourdes and who wanted to enable parishioners who would not be able to make the journey to have that experience at home. This phenomenon might be considered an example of the global becoming local, the local becoming global and then re-localised or relocated. It is certainly worth remembering that virtual pilgrimage and time-space compression are not new ideas, and that the relationship between the local and the global can take a variety of forms:



Spiritual Shopping and Consumer Choice

As I have pointed out elsewhere (Bowman 2000), few (if any) places in the UK enjoy such high status among believers and spiritual seekers of so many different persuasions as Glastonbury. Thousands visit Glastonbury for the Anglican and Catholic pilgrimages; for courses at the Isle of Avalon Foundation (which sees itself as the successor to the Druidic university); for the array of healing on offer; for the annual Goddess Conference or the Glastonbury Symposium on Cereology (Crop Circles); for ritual activity at various times on the eightfold calendar widely observed by “free range” pagans, Druids and Wiccans; to visit Britain’s first officially registered Goddess Temple; and as individual pilgrims, spiritual seekers and tourists. In addition to groups already mentioned, Glastonbury has attracted devotees of Sai Baba, members of ISKCON, Baha’is, Sufis of various sorts, and at least three people claiming either to be, to channel or to represent Buddha Maitreya in recent years. People come not just from Britain but from all over Europe, North America, the Antipodes and elsewhere. In addition, many more know of Glastonbury through countless myths and memorates,

novels set in Glastonbury (such as the highly influential *Mists of Avalon* by Marion Bradley), books, articles, songs, television features and increasing numbers of Glastonbury-related websites.

Spiritual seekers can also be keen consumers. Medieval Glastonbury grew up around the Abbey, with businesses developing to cater to the varied needs of the people who came to visit, feeding them, housing them and selling them mementos and relics. Just as a medal or statue from a pilgrimage site is popularly regarded as more powerful or sacred, now there is an assumption that the crystal bought in Glastonbury and bathed in Chalice Well water might be especially precious or empowering. For those seeking accommodation, some Bed and Breakfast establishments offer particular types of healing or meditation to discerning clients to enhance their stay in Avalon.⁵

I mentioned in relationship to vernacular religion the importance of personal experience of efficacy, a theme very much in evidence in contemporary spirituality. The contemporary spiritual seeker has a “toolkit” approach to spirituality, seeking whatever spiritual tools “work” for her or him at any given time. In pursuit of the individual spiritual quest, globalisation undoubtedly provides a global toolbox (some might say a Pandora’s box) of vocabulary, artefacts, and praxis. Glastonbury bears witness to the global nature and commodification of contemporary spirituality, with the availability of “tools for personal and planetary healing” at Maitreya Monastery (formerly known as Archangel Michael’s Soul Therapy Centre); didgeridoos; Tibetan singing bowls; “Feng Shui products”; and images of assorted Bodhisattvas, Hindu deities and ancient goddesses. Shops such as The Goddess and the Green Man, Starchild Apothecary, Stone Age (“To promote the practical use of crystals and gemstones for healing and transformation”), Man Myth and

⁵ Hannah Drown’s MA Thesis (Drown 2001) offers fascinating insights into the “alternative” Bed and Breakfast scene in Glastonbury.

Magick (“A shop to build your dreams on”), Yin Yang (“Ancient Principles — Beautiful Solutions”), Natural Earthling (“for dance, yoga and meditation products”), and The Psychic Piglet cater to a wide range of needs and tastes, and the spiritual shopping opportunities presented by such outlets are part of Glastonbury’s attraction for its varied visitors.

It will already be obvious that globalised consumer choice is not confined to material goods, as the number of different religious groups and spiritual interests to be found there indicates. There are numerous types of healing available (including crystal therapy, “Zen Shiatsu,” past life regression, Reiki, Hopi ear candle therapy and shamanic healing); assorted forms of yoga and meditation (including “shamanic moving meditation” and “Osho kundalini meditation”); and the more active can enjoy ecstatic dance, belly dancing, and Dances of Universal Peace. People can experience Sufi Zikr, Darshan with His Holiness Gyalwa Jampa, or “Shamanic journeying,” and they can attend such events as a “Kabbalah Weekend” or a Wolfclan Teaching Lodge.

In such a context it is inevitable that the local and the global interact, as in the case of the Glastonbury dream catcher. The dream catcher is an item “borrowed” from Native American tradition, increasingly common as both ethnic chic and spiritual tool. Looking something like a stylised circular spider’s web, it is said to catch or filter out bad dreams. However, typical of the creative “spiritual cottage industries” that flourish there, I was given a “Glastonbury dream catcher,” the web incorporating beads of blue, green and purple, with two pale turquoise feathers attached (all considered very “Aquarian” colours) and it came with a label from the maker claiming that it was “specially charged with Glastonbury energy.”

The toolkit approach to the spiritual quest and the global gleanings available to the contemporary spiritual searcher can occasion stress as well as opportunity. With so much to choose from, and with the individual responsible for personal spiritual success, in some ways there is no excuse for a spiritual seeker not to get it

right. There are those who say that Glastonbury acts as spiritual magnifying glass, so that things are bigger, bolder, more extreme in Glastonbury — and that includes good *and* bad, positive *and* negative. While many people feel they have found their spiritual destiny in Glastonbury, many come to Glastonbury with questions, conditions and problems that cannot be resolved easily. Drug addiction and mental health issues undoubtedly are part of the Glastonbury scene. The widespread perception of Glastonbury as a place outside conventional normality is wryly summed up in the badge for sale in one Glastonbury shop which reads “Glastonbury is an Open Air Lunatic Asylum.” Bryan Turner’s question (summarising Roland Robertson), “How is a stable self possible when permanent reflectiveness is a necessary consequence of global relativisation?” (1994:112) seems to have some relevance here.

Glastonbury is able to function as a global spiritual and experiential bazaar in part because the prevailing ethos of contemporary religiosity encourages spiritually shopping around and creative consumerism to create and develop the personally-crafted package that is the individual quest. However, such trends are amplified in Glastonbury by its claims to be significant in or connected with a variety of world religious traditions.

Brahmin, Sheikh and Buddha in Glastonbury

If we are thinking about continuity and change in relation to the local and the global in Glastonbury, what is most striking at present is scale; the conceptual world with which Glastonbury engages is a very much bigger and more varied place than simply Christian Glastonbury or Arthur’s Avalon.

The extent to which “eastern” products, praxis and philosophies enjoy popularity in Glastonbury can to some degree be seen as indicative of the “Easternisation” (Campbell 1999) of much contemporary spiritual discourse. However, for some, the perception of Glastonbury as a great Druidic centre also plays a part in establishing its Indo-European credentials and to some extent explains

why it might be “natural” to adopt such ideas and practices. Since the 18th century, some writers and practitioners have drawn connections between Hinduism and Druidry by identifying Druids and Brahmins with one another (see Robinson 2000). That this trend continues is indicated by the following extract from the *Druid Directory*:

Like the Brahmins, the Druids of old were teachers, priests, doctors, historians, poets, prophets, guardians of lore and givers of law. Brahmin and Druid were both noted for their devotion to the concept of transcendent Truth. . . .

As far as we know, the religion practised among the tribal peoples of pre-Roman Europe had no name, just as adherents of what we call Hinduism refer to their faith simply as “the eternal religion.” Again like Hinduism, this religion seems to have consisted not so much of a uniform system of practice and belief as of innumerable local cults based around local or tribal deities. The rites of these cults were overseen by members of the Druid caste, much as those of Hinduism are overseen by Brahmins. (Shallcrass and Restall Orr 2001:8–9)

However, Glastonbury’s global significance is more specifically affirmed by its incorporation into the beliefs, praxis and worldview of two groups drawing on very different religious traditions. While a variety of Sufi groups have had a presence in Glastonbury over the years, currently the most publicly active Sufis there is the Naqshbandi-Haqqaniyya of Shaikh Nazim al-Haqqani al-Qubrusi (see Draper 2002:199–209). In 1999 Sheikh Nazim visited Glastonbury and declared that it was “the spiritual heart of Britain.” He felt it necessary for the group to have a presence in Glastonbury, and this was achieved through opening the Healing Hearts Charity shop run by “Zero,” a Swedish convert who is the local group leader. Sheikh Nazim and his Naqshbandi Tariqa are convinced that Christ came to Glastonbury, as we read on their website:

Perhaps the most important thing is that the Prophet Isa (peace be upon him), Jesus Christ, for whatever reason, came here a lot. This has been verified by Sheikh Nazim who said that by the power of the phrase “Bismillahi Rahmani Rahim” Isa was able to transport his whole being here. He left his mark by building, along with Yusuf/Joseph of Arimethea, the famous “wattle and

daub” or “old” church. (<http://www.the-heart.net/features/index.htm>; accessed 1 September 2003)

They feel that the Abbey is the holiest ground in Glastonbury, and believe that when Christ returns to earth he will re-appear in Glastonbury. Thus the Christian vernacular tradition of Jesus in Glastonbury is used to connect Glastonbury with Sufism and Sufism with Glastonbury.

Similarly, the myth of Jesus in Glastonbury is intricately woven into the worldview of the American believed by his followers to be an incarnation of both Jesus and Buddha, formerly known as His Holiness Tulku Buddha Maitreya Rinpoche, now His Holiness Gyalwa Jampa (Sanat Maitreya Kumara), Director of the Church of Shambhala Vajradhara Maitreya Sangha (see <http://www.tibetanfoundation.org/introduction.htm>). In an interview in September 2003, His Holiness confirmed that Jesus did indeed spend time in Glastonbury as a young man, after which he went to India and then Tibet. He claims that it is part of “traditional knowledge” in Tibetan Buddhism that Jesus not only visited Tibet then but reincarnated there on a number of occasions. This explains why, in some respects such as hierarchical structure, monasticism and the use of prayer beads, Tibetan Buddhism is “almost identical to the Catholic church, or Christianity.” Self-consciously repeating the previous pattern of events, His Holiness felt that in this incarnation it was important for him to come to Glastonbury before starting his work in Tibet, where he claims responsibility for supporting and restoring a number of Buddhist monasteries. In addition to regularly holding Darshan in Glastonbury, it is now his ambition to bring increasing numbers of Tibetan monks with knowledge of the teachings of Jesus in various incarnations to Maitreya Monastery (previously called Archangel Michael’s Soul Therapy Centre), located in a former church in Glastonbury. This will be the first step towards transforming all of Glastonbury into a monastic settlement, one aspect of His Holiness’s ambition to restore the status and practice of monasticism worldwide so that people may realise their true spiritual potential. Here we see the



Figure 2. Entrance to Archangel Michael's Soul Therapy Centre (now Maitreya Monastery), demonstrating the mixture of Christian and Tibetan Buddhist influences. (Photo: Marion Bowman)

vernacular tradition of Jesus in Glastonbury being utilised to assert connections between East and West, Jesus and Tibetan Buddhism, and Tibetan Buddhism and Glastonbury.

Negotiating the Local and the Global

We have established that many people in Glastonbury see themselves as part of global culture, and are at ease with the idea that the local and the global interact fruitfully to enhance individuals' spiritual lives. However, spiritual consumers face ethical issues such as where the fine line lies between appreciation and appropriation, when individual desires need to be modified by environmental concern, and the extent to which it is necessary or acceptable to commodify spirituality. Some of these issues and tensions have appeared in relation to the annual Glastonbury Goddess Conference.

Goddess spirituality in Glastonbury is very buoyant and visible at present, from The Goddess and the Green Man shop on the High Street, to the Glastonbury Goddess Temple which opened in 2002 and became England's first officially registered Goddess Temple in 2003. The first Glastonbury Goddess Conference was held in 1996, co-organised by Kathy Jones, who has written extensively on the Goddess in Glastonbury, and Tyna Redpath, owner of the Goddess and the Green Man. Now a Glastonbury "institution," the conference regularly attracts not only people based in the Glastonbury area and other parts of Britain but an eclectic mix of attendees from mainland Europe, the USA and the Antipodes. An exuberant, international gathering, the organisers feel it gives the wider Goddess community the opportunity to come together from all over the world, sharing ideas, insights and enthusiasm; they also hope that what people find in Glastonbury will inspire them to go home and start their own temples and other Goddess related activities. As the 2004 conference programme stated:

Together we are riding the crest of the wave of the Goddess's return into the world, creating new forms for Her expression. The Glastonbury Goddess

Conference is one of the premier Goddess events in the world where we can gather together to express our love for her and encourage others to do likewise in their own lands and cultures. (p. 1)

Already the conference has evolved a number of “traditions,” the most public being the “Goddess in the Cart” procession during which a variety of effigies of the Goddess has been paraded through the streets of Glastonbury (Bowman 2004). In recent years the procession has featured large colourful banners depicting a range of female deities, reflecting the tendency within the contemporary Goddess movement to regard as aspects of the universal sacred female all Celtic, Egyptian, Near Eastern, Greek, Roman, Indian, African and other indigenous goddesses, Bodhisattvas in female form and the Virgin Mary. Created by American artist Lydia Ruyle, these banners have been “taken all over the world,” to every continent, a powerful physical and symbolic expression of the global nature of the Goddess.

However, tensions between the local and the global in the context of the Goddess movement, and issues of economics and environment, were thrown up by what has become known in these circles as the “Bad Fairies” incident at the first Goddess Conference.⁶ The so-called “Bad Fairies” were a group of women, including radical activists who had been involved in such protests as the Women’s Peace Camp at Greenham Common (an American military base in the UK). They marched into the Saturday night conference banquet behind a banner proclaiming “The Goddess Can Not be Bought, She is Not For Sale.” Colourfully dressed, some with painted faces, playing drums and other instruments, the Bad Fairies began chanting, shouting, running around and generally disrupting proceedings. This behaviour shook, shocked and outraged many of those present, but consequently there was sympathy for some of the points the protesters were making.

⁶ A number of people have mentioned this incident to me, but I am also indebted to Sarah Watkins for some details from her account of this incident and its aftermath (see Watkins 2000:32–149).



Figure 3. Banners by Lydia Ruyle, displayed outside the Glastonbury Goddess Temple during the Glastonbury Goddess Conference, 2003. (Photo: Marion Bowman)

One of the main issues was that of “spiritual materialism,” what was perceived as selling the Goddess to those who could afford to buy her. The Bad Fairies felt that women who could not afford the conference fee were being excluded, although Glastonbury was their spiritual home too. Other issues related to race, class and elitism, due to the mainly white, middle class attendance of the conference, reflecting the charge that the Goddess spirituality movement is a predominantly white, middle-class, middle-aged, European/North American phenomenon, neither representative of nor involved with the less privileged women of the world. Some adjustments were made in the aftermath of the protest. Although by 2004 a fully inclusive ticket covering the whole week of conference, fringe events, and the Goddess Masque and Buffet cost £272 (€476), for example, reduced rate tickets were available for the economically disadvantaged and it was possible to work at the conference in exchange for a ticket.

Tension between the local and the global was and still is raised by the issue of people travelling to Glastonbury to celebrate the Goddess. The organisers of the Goddess Conference include in the programme “Goddess Ground,” outlining the principles on which the conference is run and the basis on which decisions are made. These include:

To invite women and men from all over the world who love the Goddess to come to Glastonbury to join us in celebrating her living presence upon the Isle of Avalon at Her festival of Lammis and to create an open, loving space in which we can all experience Her. (2004 Glastonbury Goddess Conference Programme, p. 2)

Nevertheless, some eco-feminists find the international connection particularly difficult, for it means that for many getting to the conference involves air travel. As one woman pointed out,

Long distance tourism is now the second most destructive thing on the planet after the Arms trade. It [the Conference] therefore seems contradictory and antithetical to Mother Earth and love for and protection of her. (Watkins 2000:141)

In many ways the Bad Fairies incident was akin to an anti-globalisation protest in a spiritual setting. It gave pause for thought and highlighted some of the issues in the complicated negotiation between the local and the global both in Glastonbury and in the broader context of contemporary spirituality, not least the whole phenomenon of international “spiritual tourism.”

The Local, the Global and Sacred Space

It is a constant paradox for a variety of believers that while all the world is deemed sacred, some places are regarded as more sacred or special than others. As we have already established, Glastonbury exerts an attraction for a wide variety of pilgrims and spiritual tourists (Bowman 1993a) and as such is a multivalent, contested location. Disparate “travellers with a purpose” may be attracted to different locations, or, in this case, view the same sites through different spiritual lenses.

In Glastonbury there is sacredness by association, which for a variety of Christians would relate to traditions locating Joseph and Jesus there. As we have seen, this view is also shared by Sufis of Sheikh Nazim’s Naqshbandiyya Tariqa. For some, Arthur would play a similar role. As one self-styled “New-Ager” told me,

the whole idea that he lies here sleeping and will rise again, some people interpret that as meaning he’ll rise again to lead us into a New Age, a new cycle, a new beginning, a new phase in world evolution.

In the realm of popular culture, a website giving a glossary entry for the Van Morrison song “Jesus Walking Down By Avalon” concludes:

Although Jesus may or may not have actually walked down by Avalon, it is far more likely that Van Morrison walked down by Glastonbury. . . . Anyone planning a tour of important Van places should put Glastonbury high on their list. (<http://www.harbour.sfu.ca/~hayward/van/glossary/avalon.html>; accessed 15 March 2004)

Thus we find yet another reason why people might be drawn to Glastonbury. Undoubtedly one obvious but important reason people

come to Glastonbury is that valued others have come there before.

Alternatively, or additionally, sacredness or specialness might be associated with some aspect of the landscape that attracts attention and awe, which is also undoubtedly the case in Glastonbury. Successful pilgrimage or sacred sites often tend to have a hill, a spring, or a tree, for example. Perhaps predictably, Glastonbury boasts at least two springs, two lots of trees, and two hills; in physical terms, it is extremely well-endowed. However, given the context, the associational or inherent sacredness of various landscape features in Glastonbury is subject to a variety of interpretations, involving different degrees of localisation, globalisation and glocalisation.

Certain aspects of the landscape have fairly clear associations: the Glastonbury Thorn is special primarily for Christians because of the Joseph of Arimathea connection (even though some associate it with Celtic tree worship), while two ancient oak trees, known as Gog and Magog, are said to be the last remnants of a Druid Grove. But at the foot of the Tor, the chalybeate Chalice Well is sacred to some for its association with the Grail (its red waters representing the blood of Christ shed for humanity) while for others it is clearly the menstrual flow of the Goddess. Opposite Chalice Well is the calcite staining White Spring, which for a period in the 1990s became “revived” as an ancient Pagan rag well. Some see the proximity of the red and white waters as indicative of the balance of male and female energies (red representing blood, white semen) associated with the Michael and Mary leylines which are said to intertwine at the Tor; for others, as red and white are the colours of the Fairy King Gwynn Ap Nudd, the waters indicate the site of the entrance to his kingdom beneath the Tor.

Wearyall Hill is of interest to many Christians as the site of Joseph’s arrival in Glastonbury, the spot where the original staff took root, while for others it is significant as one of the two fish making the sign of Pisces on the Glastonbury Zodiac. Glastonbury Tor (the curiously contoured and conical hill which is the town’s most striking landscape feature) is the most speculated upon aspect of Glastonbury topography, with both local and global associations.



Figure 4. View of Glastonbury Tor from the Abbey grounds. The Tor is Glastonbury's most prominent and most speculated upon natural feature. (*Photo:* Marion Bowman)

The Tor is significant to Catholics as the site of the hanging of Abbot Whiting and two monks at the brutal dissolution of Glastonbury Abbey, while His Holiness Gyalwa Jampa claims that Glastonbury Tor is one of the points where God's will enters the earth (two other such points being the Great Pyramid and the Washington Monument). The Tor is variously regarded as the spiral castle of Celtic legend; a Goddess figure; the Grail Castle; a crystal filled communication beacon for extra-terrestrials; and part of the phoenix figure representing Aquarius on the Glastonbury Zodiac. Some see the Tor as a prehistoric, three-dimensional ceremonial maze, and in typical Glastonbury fashion great claims are made for it. According to the 2004 Glastonbury Goddess Conference Fringe Events publicity material, for example,

To the Hopi, the labrynth [sic] is a symbol of the Earth Goddess, and it has been found etched into rocks from Arizona to Australia. Here in Glastonbury, The Tor is the largest three-dimensional labrynth [sic] yet known.

Two extreme views of sacred sites might help to explain Glastonbury's attractiveness, and these might be summarised as "empty vessel" versus "cornucopia." Eade and Sallnow (2000:15) claim:

The power of a shrine . . . derives in large part from its character almost as a religious void, a ritual space capable of accommodating diverse meanings and practices . . . This, in the final analysis, is what confers upon a major shrine its essential universalistic character: its capacity to absorb and reflect a multiplicity of religious discourses, to be able to offer a variety of clients what each of them desires. . . . The sacred centre, then, in this perspective, appears as a vessel into which pilgrims devoutly pour their hopes, prayers and aspirations.

At the other end of the spectrum is not empty vessel but cornucopia. Within contemporary spirituality, particularly some branches of paganism, we find the resurgence of animism, which means that there is no such thing as an inanimate object. Similarly, for many people now there can be no such thing as an empty space. As the late Anthony Roberts (alternative publisher and earth mysteries writer) put it,

The holy ground of Glastonbury holds many strange secrets. They are heavily festooned with in the rich (often gaudy) accoutrements of myth and magic, but they all resolve themselves around a uniformly synergic nexus. This is that the Glastonbury terrain, with its physical and meta-physical alchemies, is a vast orrery and teaching environment for revealing (and enhancing) all that is spiritual in the nature of mankind. This blending of the physically symbolic with the symbolically physical this writer has termed the art of geomythics. (1992:18).

In Glastonbury, the sacred is felt to communicate itself through the Tor and Chalice Well, through landscape figures of the Goddess, through leylines, through the “buzz” of energy felt by many there — although there is clearly room for personal interpretation as to the nature of what is communicated. The landscape may speak to people in Glastonbury, but it tells a number of different stories. With the idea of the land almost as active participant in the interpretation of it, we find one of the most significant features of contemporary spirituality in the negotiation between the local and the global, interconnectedness.

Interconnectedness

Interconnectedness is a powerful leitmotif in contemporary globalised spirituality. As I have commented elsewhere (Bowman 2000), this interconnectedness takes a variety of forms and operates in a variety of ways. There is the interconnectedness of past and present, whereby people seek to connect with ancient wisdom (such as Druidic knowledge) and what is regarded as the “timeless wisdom” of indigenous peoples, all of which are considered important in recapturing a previous era of global harmony, when humanity enjoyed a holistic and symbiotic relationship with nature and the planet. Past life remembrance and ideas of reincarnation are seen to operate in connecting past and present. Some regard the former leader of the Glastonbury Order of Druids as a reincarnation of Merlin, for example, and believe that a “karmic cluster” of “King” Arthur Pendragon (originally John Timothy Rothwell) and

his knights have been brought together at this time of national spiritual emergency.

Connections between the seen and the unseen realms are perceived and pursued in assorted ways in Glastonbury. When Frederick Bligh Bond was excavating Glastonbury Abbey early in the 20th century, he claimed to be receiving guidance, via a medium, from a medieval monk. There are now courses on working with angels and workshops to put people in touch with their spirit guide; at one point it was even possible to have spirit guide portraits painted.

In 2003 “World Wide Web” (a sculpture of seven willow webs) was erected in Chalice Well Gardens, of which artist Freddie Foosiya wrote:

The seven webs represent the seven cycles of creation and the seven major chakras (energy centres) within the body. Chalice Well is part of a world wide web of places dedicated to peace and the awakening of humanity to the realization of our oneness with nature.

Many in Glastonbury are familiar with the environmentalist adage “Act locally, think globally.” It has become almost a cliché in alternative circles to point out that what the space exploration of the 20th century gave us was a picture of the whole world, of the world as one entity. After that, the logic runs, it was impossible not to view the world as a single place. James Lovelock’s “Gaia hypothesis” (1982), regarding the earth and all life forms upon it as a living, interactive, self-regulating organism, is widely quoted to support this holistic worldview. As one Glastonbury resident told me,

There are more and more people now that are just accepting this, that Glastonbury is the heart centre, if Gaia is the living planet and is literally the *body* of some kind of intelligence, then that intelligence must have energy centres, and often these coincide with holy places, whether they’re Mecca, or Ayers Rock, or Glastonbury.

Thus many believe that what happens in one part of the world — especially in “special” places like Glastonbury — can have an impact on and significance for the whole, both physically and spiritually.

In terms of physical interconnectedness and the relationship between the local and the global, there are two particularly significant phenomena: sacred geometry (often referred to as gematria) and earth energies. Both sacred geometry and earth energies are perceived to have connective roles between different eras, localities, cultures and worldviews, and are used to support the idea that literally “beneath the surface” seemingly disparate structures and spiritual outlooks have some common elements or are in some way related if we can see past the superficial differences. (It might be argued that this is simply relativism on a global scale.) It is claimed that the sacred geometry of Stonehenge and Glastonbury Abbey are linked, for example, and furthermore that the ground plan of Glastonbury Abbey conforms in terms of gematria to that of the New Jerusalem outlined in the Book of Revelation, Chapter 21 (see Michell 1992). Draper notes that among followers of Sheikh Nazim at one point there was speculation that “the Lady Chapel in the Abbey had similar dimensions to the Ka’ba in Makka” (2002:209). A figure of particular importance in Glastonbury gematria is the Vesica Piscis, two interlocking circles, representing “the interpenetration of the material and immaterial worlds or the yin and the yang where the conscious and unconscious meet” (Howard-Gordon 1997:68). The shape of the intersection has been associated both with the fish of early Christian symbolism and with the yoni of Hinduism.

In terms of connecting the local and the global, one of the most striking quasi-physical expressions of interconnectedness is the concept of leylines, perceived as lines or identifiable channels of earth energy and power. Leylines are envisaged as connecting places; they tie together apparently historically, geographically, culturally and religiously disparate places like Glastonbury, Stonehenge, Ayers Rock (Uluru), Mecca and the Great Pyramid into a global package of earth energy, power and sacredness. The sacred places of the world are literally bound together. Predictably, Glastonbury does not merely lie on one leyline; it is said to be at the node of a number of leylines. Indeed, many argue that this



Figure 5. The wellhead at Chalice Well, decorated for Lammas 2003; note the Vesica Piscis design on the well cover. (Photo: Marion Bowman)

convergence of leylines is what gives Glastonbury its special energy, its healing powers, its “buzz.”

Ideas of interconnectedness are also embedded in concepts of earth healing, and the ability — indeed duty — some perceive of acting locally at significant places like Glastonbury in order to have a global, spiritual impact. His Holiness Gyalwa Jampa, for example, claims that “if holy people go back to holy sites, the site re-awakens and the whole earth can be healed” (interview 2 September 2003), and that is one reason he feels he has to be active in Glastonbury. On 16 August 1987 there was the great global project of the Harmonic Convergence, when hundreds gathered on Glastonbury Tor as people attempted to “activate” sacred sites around the world.⁷

Many of the ideas of interconnectedness discussed were incorporated in July 2004 during the Glastonbury Goddess Conference in an extended ceremonial pilgrimage to four sites within Glastonbury specifically “to generate healing energy and to radiate it to all parts of Brigit’s Isles and beyond” (2004 Goddess Conference Programme, p. 7). The plan for the Earth Ceremony on Chalice Hill (“the Great Mother’s rounded and ever pregnant belly”) was typical of the day’s events:

As we face outwards to all the directions we will sing our Earth Chant and send clearing and healing energy outwards from Avalon through the meridians and energy lines of the Earth, which is Her sacred body, to the whole of the land which is Brigit’s Isles, and connecting to the land of Europe and to all the continents. We will send healing energy to all the creatures who live in and on the earth, to the badgers, boars and foxes, to the earthworms, moles and snakes, to the earth elementals, gnomes and faeries. (2004 Goddess Conference Programme, p. 9).

⁷ While accepting the idea of earth energies, feminist Goddess artist and anti-New Age author Monica Sjoo saw a far more sinister agenda behind the Harmonic Convergence: “New Agers travel the world to sacred places where they attempt to manipulate Earth’s sacred energies, planting crystals at standing stones and in similar places. Their plan is to facilitate the entry into this realm of extraterrestrials by changing the energy patterns of the Earth, and this, not Earth healing, was also the purpose of the so-called ‘Harmonic Convergence’ in August 1987” (Sjoo 1998:5).

At Chalice Hill, the priestess said the healing energy was being sent out though the leylines, to the stone circles, to the crop circles and out to all the world. The next morning, conference delegates were told that they had truly sent their and Brigit's healing out across the land, and that "Something has changed in the landscape because of the work we did yesterday."

Continuity or Change?

One effect of globalisation, it is commonly said, is to make the world a single place — and we have seen how certain trends in contemporary spirituality foster that. However Glastonbury simultaneously maintains within it a variety of worlds and worldviews. These different worlds can interact with each other in various ways, for example in the mixing and merging of myths: Jesus was in Glastonbury to attend the Druidic University, or to walk the ley-lines from which he gained his powers as a healer; King Arthur will rise in Glastonbury to lead us into the New Age. As Hervieu-Leger (2000:75) puts it,

In the fluid, mobile domain of modern belief liberated from the hold of all-embracing institutions of believing, all symbols are interchangeable and capable of being combined and transposed. All syncretisms are possible, all retreads imaginable.

In Glastonbury there is undoubtedly a tendency towards "both/and" rather than "either/or."

No one version of Glastonbury has a complete monopoly, and although the current simultaneity of belief and practice might seem very much a product of contemporary spirituality, I would suggest that it finds antecedents in vernacular religion. For example, there is a story that I have been told on a number of occasions, both in relation to fairy belief and to the Tor, concerning either St. Collen (a 7th century Welsh saint) or more vaguely an Abbot of Glastonbury. Baldly told, this Christian was on the Tor when he encountered two small persons who requested that he returned at midnight, as their lord was keen to meet him. When he met them

at the summit of the Tor at the appointed hour, he was suddenly transported into a fabulous palace, magnificently decorated, with fine food piled on golden platters, and full of small people dressed in red and white (fairies). There he met King Gwynn Ap Nudd, who invited him to partake of the feast. Knowing that to eat fairy food would imprison him in fairyland, the Christian declined the offer, drew out a bottle of holy water, scattered it all around him, and suddenly found himself back on top of the Tor. While this traditional tale appears to demonstrate the superiority of Christian power, it underlines a rather important point — that although Christianity was in the ascendant, the fairies were still there, literally below the surface.

When introducing Glastonbury, I made the point that what has consistently happened is that Glastonbury has been positioned at the centre of whatever the prevailing myth or worldview might be. The claims simply get bigger as the worldview expands. Thus the shift from Glastonbury as “cradle of English Christianity” to Glastonbury as Heart Chakra of Planet Earth could be seen as one of scale rather than substance. Perhaps we could say that Glastonbury seems always to have had a gift for localisation, or as Prince and Riches put it, “domestication” (2000:294):

Our premise is that ideas exist in the form they do, and in the place they are, because of local exigencies. Particular ideas are voiced in local situations, and would not be so voiced if local situations did not invite this to be. People in local communities, especially in literate cultures, know about similar ideas existing in other places or times; they may well consider that such similar ideas are directly influencing them in what they say and do. But local exigencies determine in the first place *whether or not* these ideas are taken on board, and in the second place *how* they are taken on board — to harmonise with local understandings and meanings such ideas come to be altered or “domesticated.”

In the undoubtedly globalised context of contemporary spirituality in Glastonbury, new phenomena are constantly emerging, but I suspect that the extent of their novelty has been exaggerated. If we take into account its long and colourful vernacular religious history,

I think there is, on balance, more continuity than change in the relationship between the local and the global in Glastonbury.

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LOCALITY AND MYTH: THE RESACRALIZATION OF SELJA AND THE CULT OF ST. SUNNIVA

LISBETH MIKAELSSON

Summary

The article demonstrates the merging of contemporary processes of resacralization, retraditionalization, and local identity construction embodied in one particular example, the island of Selja on the west coast of Norway. In Roman-Catholic times, Selja was a major pilgrimage site, famous for its legend of St. Sunniva, an Irish princess who fled from her country and took refuge on the island where she suffered a martyr death. The national conversion to Lutheranism in the 16th century put an end to the official Sunniva cult. In our time, however, the legend has been revived and is celebrated for various purposes by the local Lutheran state church, the tourist business, and individuals who are attracted to the symbolic complex of Selja-Sunniva for spiritual reasons. The article argues that the revival of the legend converts the old site with its ruins and landscape features into a narrative space, re-establishing a sanctuary with a variety of symbolic references. Selja meets the requirements of modern seekers and pilgrims, while its history and myth are excellently fitted to serve local identity construction.

Introduction

“Why do we need the past? What do we need it for?” David Lowenthal asks in his momentous *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1999:35). One answer has to do with the resacralization of place now happening in European Protestant countries where sites from the Catholic past are being reclaimed as pilgrimage centres. Resuscitating memories and myths connected to the site’s history seems to be a necessary ingredient in such revivals. This paper examines what kind of stories, events, and people are involved in the recreation of an ancient Catholic site on a small island in Norway called Selja. With its combination of female symbolism and spiritual locality construction I think the Selja case has something pertinent to say about contemporary religious change in our part of the world.

Selja was important in the early period of Norwegian Christianity, and its history bears witness to the time-honoured relations between Norway and the British Isles. Selja was famous for its martyr legend of Saint Sunniva and the Seljumen. These “holy ones of Selja” as they were called, were worshipped during the Middle Ages, and iconographic representations of St. Sunniva were found in many churches all over the country. The saint was known from Finland in the east to the Faeroe Islands in the west and Germany in the south. The Sunniva legend is even today the key element in the popular interest in Selja. Basically, the ongoing resacralization is a retelling and revival of the old story in various settings. Selja is an example of modern “topophilia” — understood in the way religious scholar Marion Bowman has defined it as “the belief that certain locations are inherently powerful and exude a heightened sense of place” (Bowman 2000:91) — and the narrative element is essential in the topophilia of contemporary Selja.

Sanctuaries are obvious examples of topophilia, but the usefulness of the concept lies in its ability to encompass many different kinds of special locations and the varying meanings and motivations attached to them, including secular ones. In a parallel way, the concept of religious tourism has fewer theological and traditional implications than the concept of pilgrimage. It is therefore better suited to encompass visitors that come for other reasons than devotion, like interest in history, art, or folklore (Nolan and Nolan 1989:43–45). To draw a clear line between tourists and pilgrims has become problematic, compare Edith and Victor Turner’s well-known remark: “a tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist.” They talk of “closet” pilgrims, and the “symbolic communitas” people are seeking even when they “bury themselves in anonymous crowds on beaches” (Turner and Turner 1978:20). In a pluralistic society the make-up and status of a sacred place is not a clear-cut matter, as can be demonstrated by Selja. Today the site is a holy place to some people, a “special” place to many more. Even this specialness has spiritual overtones, however. Some visi-

tors to the island are pilgrims in a more traditional sense, but many cannot be easily categorized. As a contemporary sacred site Selja transcends confessional boundaries, and it illustrates the fleeting boundaries between believers and non-believers.

The Site

The island of Selja with its sacred ground is located on the western coast between the cities of Bergen and Trondheim. The nearest locality where people live is the county of Selje on the mainland with some 3100 inhabitants. The great mountain mass of Stadlandet belongs to the area; the sea outside the cliffs of Stad is the most dangerous part of the Norwegian coast, a scene of countless shipwrecks through the ages. From times immemorial ships would stay in the Selje region waiting for calmer weather in order to pass Stad on their way northwards. Further north is the old city of Trondheim, with its famous Middle Age cathedral housing the relics of Saint Olav, the most important pilgrimage site in Scandinavia before the Reformation. Many of those pilgrims would come by boat and make a halt at Selja. The premodern transport system gave the island a much more central position than it has today, since the main route was the sea. In the old days there was a lively traffic of merchants, fishermen, officials, kings and their navies along the extensive Norwegian coast. The name "Norway" probably refers to this sea route. Nowadays this part of the country is a favourite tourist area, receiving crowds of visitors wanting to see the famous fjords. Selja's location is off the main tourist routes; still, a number of travellers find their way to the spot, attracted as well by the magnificent scenery of Stadlandet and Selje.

On the island itself there are ruins of a Christian centre of considerable size. Some of the oldest Christian buildings in the country, consisting of churches and monastic houses, were situated here. A lofty church tower is the most conspicuous edifice left. According to the sagas, the first church was erected on the island some few years before 1000. English Benedictine monks started to build



Figure 1. The holy site of Selja is dramatically situated against the open sea of Stad. In the foreground lie the ruins of the medieval sanctuary, leading up to the cave; further away are the remains of the monastery. (Photo: K.A. Bergsvik)

a monastery dedicated to St. Alban here in about 1100. The pivotal element of the site is a large cave in the mountainside with an old stone altar. It is called Sunnivahola (“the Sunniva cave”). Within the cave was a chapel dedicated to St. Michael, whose cult here may be older than the cult of Sunniva. In the same area there is a natural spring of sweet water, Sunnivakilden (“the Sunniva spring”). The holy spring was inside the cave in earlier times. To the northwest, the site faces the open sea and Stadlandet.

Scholars have compared Selja with sacred sites in Britain like Iona and Lindisfarne. The British historian Barbara Crawford draws attention to the many small islands on the southeast coast of Scotland that are associated with hermits and missionary saints. Caves often played a prominent part in the cults of such persons. She concludes that the cave of Sunniva belongs to a long tradition in the Celtic church of mountain caves used as shelters for holy men (Crawford 1997:178). Generally, religious practice in Britain in the same period is a relevant context for the sacred site at Selja. Considering the religious reconstruction processes going on in places like Iona, Britain is even now a pertinent context. Actually there are Norwegians who see today’s Iona as a model of what Selja could be.

The Story

There is hardly a feature article about Selja which does not retell the legend about Sunniva and the Seljumen — the fascinating story of a young, pious woman who appears as “the mother” of Norwegian Christianity. The saint herself is another British connection, testifying to the strong influence of Britain in the early Christianization of Norway. Her beautiful name, Sunniva, is a development of old English *Sunnigifu*, meaning “gift from the sun” (Johnsen 1968: 51–52).

The oldest information about the figure of Sunniva and the dramatic events at Selja is found in two manuscripts from the 12th century, *The Legend of the Holy Ones at Selja*, originally in Latin

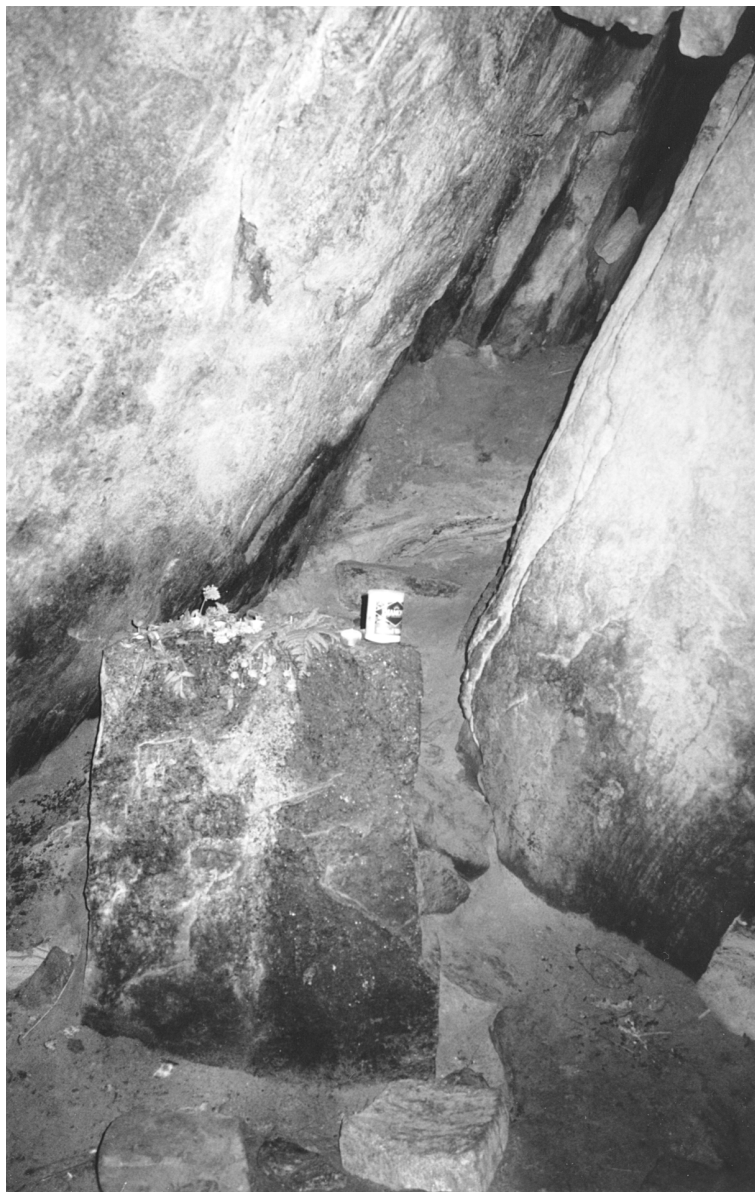


Figure 2. Inside the Sunniva cave. (Photo: L. Mikaelsson)



Figure 3. St. Sunniva depicted in a triptych from Trondenes church in Troms, Norway. (Photo: courtesy of Bergen Museum)

(*Acta sanctorum in Selio*, about 1170), and *Odd the Monk's Saga of Olav Tryggvason* (*Soga om Olav Tryggvason etter Odd munk Snorreson*, about 1190). The same events are also described in *The Great Saga of Olav Tryggvason* (*Den store saga om Olav Tryggvason*) in *Flateyarbók*, from the 1380s.

The written records are not unanimous in all the details, but a broad summary of their legend versions goes as follows: Sunniva was the beautiful daughter of an Irish king who had succeeded her father on the throne. She was wooed by a Viking chieftain, but being a chaste virgin and devoted Christian she refused the brutal heathen. When he came to conquer her kingdom, Sunniva and many of her people fled by putting out to sea in three ships. Wanting to be led by God to their destination, they did not try to navigate the ships, lacking both sails and oars. Two ships landed on Selja, the third on Kinn, a small island further south.

The Irishmen settled at Selja. For some time they lived peacefully, until the natives on the mainland who used Selja as a pasture for their sheep accused the foreigners of stealing animals from their stock. When the fearsome chieftain and his men came to punish the intruders, Sunniva and her people gathered in the above-mentioned cave. Sunniva prayed to God to save them from the heathens, and his answer came in the shape of an avalanche of rocks that killed them all. These events are supposed to have happened in the middle of the 10th century. Later on, sailors passing the island witnessed a strange column of light. There were also rumours that human bones had been found emitting a sweet scent.

A main character in the written sources is the former Viking and illustrious Norwegian king, Olav Tryggvason. Olav Tryggvason is not the legendary St. Olav of Trondheim, but a forerunner, who played a vital part in the Christianization of western Norway. Before he converted to Christianity, Olav raided Northumberland, Scotland, The Isle of Man, The Hebrides, Wales and Ireland. He probably knew the court at Wessex, and had learnt how royalty in England was connected to the Church and its missionary activities. It is also probable that he knew the importance of relics in the Christian cult.

There is even a tradition that he had visited the cloister island Skellig Michael outside the coast of Ireland.

According to the sources, Olav Tryggvason was baptized in England in 994. He came back to Norway in 995 to claim sovereignty, and immediately started the grand task of Christianizing the country. After hearing about the strange phenomena at Selja, he went with his bishop to the island in 996 to investigate. The king then found heaps of sweet-smelling bones and the undisturbed corpse of Sunniva in the cave. The bones were collected and kept on the island. King Olav is said to have built a small church near the cave for the corpse of Sunniva, allegedly the first church on the site.

Such are the main outlines of the partly legendary, partly historical background for the cult of Sunniva and the Seljumen on the island. Sunniva is the first saint in Norway, and it is quite possible that Selja is the oldest Norwegian centre of Christian pilgrimage. Actually few traces are left of the medieval pilgrimage, probably because pilgrims arrived by boat (Hommedal 1997:191). In its first written version the legend dates back to the time when the city of Bergen was made the centre of the western diocese, which happened in 1170. Sunniva's shrine was then moved from Selja to Bergen on September 7 (*translatio reliquiarum Sanctae Sunnivae*), and the saint became *bergensium patrona*, the city's patron saint. The shrine stayed in the cathedral of Bergen until the Reformation, when the edifice and its shrine were destroyed. Before 1170, Selja had been the diocesan centre, a position held by the island since the establishment of three dioceses in the country in 1068. After the *translatio* Bergen naturally became the pivot of the Sunniva cult. The cave continued as a sanctuary though, and the monastery expanded. Relics of the Seljumen as well as of St. Alban were still kept on the island (Hommedal 1997:185, 191).

The old traditions suggest the existence of a full-fledged sanctuary consisting of an impressive cave, relics of saintly martyrs and a miraculous spring. During the Middle Ages the cave and its adjacent monastery were a well-known shrine where people came to be healed and to venerate St. Sunniva and St. Michael. July 8 is the

old memorial day of the legendary martyrs, called Seljumannamesse.¹ In Catholic times, Seljumannamesse was celebrated all over the country. The heyday of the monastery was in the early part of the 14th century. It was hit very hard by the Black Death later on in the same century, and never regained its old position. When Protestantism superseded Catholicism in 1536, and the Church became a Lutheran state church, monastic activities on the island were already extinct. The archives of the monastery were burnt in 1668.

Critical Considerations

Critical scholarship has long since concluded that the legend contains but few credible historical elements. Sunniva has been dispelled from historical reality altogether; she is seen as a variation of the Ursula-legend and a specimen of the devoted virgin-type in Christian lore. Recently it has been suggested that Old-Irish legends related to Donnán of Eigg is a probable matrix for the Sunniva story (Rekdal 2003). The saint is thought to be a later addition to the tradition of the Seljumen, now generally considered the original element. Scholars have proposed that Olav Tryggvason had learnt the story of Sunniva in England and that he, seeing the need for a saint with a local connection in the Christianization process, was the one who introduced her in Norway. No matter what the king's role was, rational calculations of this sort may explain the establishment of the Sunniva cult.

Three questions remain however: who were the Seljumen and why did the king and clergy choose Selja as the location for a church? Was Selja a holy place in pre-Christian times? No one has yet been able to give final answers to these questions, and several hypotheses have been launched.

¹ July was the most important pilgrimage month in Northern Europe, due to the agricultural year and its demand for harvest labour later in the summer (Nolan and Nolan 1989:62).

Selja's strategic position on the coast is one clue to the choice of place, but probably not the only one. A possible pre-Christian cave cult is another. Students of Christian pilgrimage in Western Europe maintain that if a shrine has three or more such site features as a mountain cave by a curative spring, or a sacred tree hanging over a holy well by a sacred stone, the probability is twelve to one that additional evidence will prove that the place was holy in pre-Christian times (Nolan and Nolan 1989:303). Two Norwegian scholars have recently discussed the idea of a cave cult at Selja. Historian of religion Gro Steinsland suggests that the divine forerunners of St. Sunniva and St. Michael may have been the old Norse fertility couple Njord and Skade (Steinsland 1997), and philologist Else Mundal thinks there may have been a cult of elves ("landalfr," "landvette") in the cave (Mundal 1997). There are no archaeological proofs of such cults, but the fact that there was a St. Michael's church in the cave is another indicator, since chapels for the archangel were often raised on previously pagan cult sites (Hommedal 1995:164).

The old tradition of the Seljumen is also an interesting clue to the choice of Selja. Archaeological excavations have ascertained that people have lived on Selja since the old Iron Age, and remnants of prehistoric residence near the cave have been uncovered. Most likely the tradition of the Seljumen originates from later settlements. The Irish element in the story cannot be rejected, as several scholars have demonstrated. It is quite possible that Celtic hermits stayed on the island during an early period. Their residence and missionary activity may explain the tradition of the holy Seljumen. The ascetic ideal of *peregrinatio* in the early Irish church led devoted Christians to leave home and family for Christ's sake and go to Shetland, the Orkney Islands, Iceland, and probably also Norway (Crawford 1997:165). In many places in western Norway, Celtic stone crosses document early Irish influence. If human bones were really found at Selja around 1000, they could be the relics of such holy men from Ireland. The Seljumen may therefore be related to the cave cult not as martyrs but as the inventors, or the original

objects of the cult. The old designation “Seljumannamesse” refers indeed to the Seljumen, but being anonymous, they lost the competition with the striking figure of Sunniva.

Selja under Lutheranism

Associated as they are with “superstitious” beliefs in saints and their relics, sacred sites have usually had no part in Lutheran worship, and Selja was no exception. Sporadic visits to the site continued though, and there are reasons to believe that Sunniva was not entirely forgotten. In the nineteenth century, many small wooden crosses were discovered in the cave. Archaeologist Alf Tore Hommedal assumes they must have been put there a long time after the Reformation, since the tough climate does not allow pinewood to last for very long. He suggests that the crosses may be votive gifts, possibly connected to Sunniva’s function as the patron of seafarers, especially important here close to the dangerous sea outside Stad (Hommedal 1996:22 and 1997:194–95). A local history states that it was custom in Selje until 1860 to give candles to the parish church if people had been saved from shipwreck, and the author relates the custom to the old idea of Sunniva as the seafarers’ protector (Os 1957:67). An investigation into the regional use of names up to 1800 proved that the name Sunniva and its variants were widespread in the western parts of the country, but hardly found in some other regions. The differences may be explained as repercussions of the Catholic cult of Sunniva as the patron of western Norway (Morsund 1996:6–7).

A steady growth in local interest has taken place during the twentieth century. Archaeological restoration of the ruins in 1935–1940 involved workpeople from Selje and naturally stimulated local curiosity. The great anniversary of St. Olav in 1930 probably reminded Selje inhabitants that they had their own saint to remember.² Seljumannamesse was occasionally held in the 1940s and

² The suggestion was made by Alf Tore Hommedal in a personal communication.

1950s, and organizations that arranged meetings in the area often included visits to the island in their programmes.³ For the last 15 years or so, the Lutheran church in the area has celebrated Seljumannamesse regularly on the island. Wedding ceremonies in the ruins have also become quite frequent among local people. Major church anniversaries and the rise in tourism brought increased focus on the site in the latter part of the 20th century. Admittedly there are persons in Selje who say they are “tired of the old stones,” but generally people have become more conscious and proud of their unique historical inheritance. Children are now taught the lore connected with the island from an early age. The profitable touristic functions are also quite obvious to everyone. To an increasing extent, Selja has become an important source of communal, cultural and economic enrichment for the region.

Signs of a Sunniva renaissance have also emerged in the city of Bergen. A group of conservative, high church priests from the local Lutheran churches started to celebrate Seljumannamesse in 1989 by making a procession from the cathedral to the site of Kristkirken (Christ’s Church), where Sunniva’s shrine was kept before the Reformation. This extraordinary procession was led by the priests and deacons in their garbs, one of them holding up a cross. Halts were made at fixed places en route, where prayers were recited. At the venerable site of the pre-Reformation Christ’s Church, a full Lutheran service was celebrated in the open air. In addition to paying homage to the city’s patron saint, this Seljumannamesse celebration was defined as a day of prayer for Bergen and the diocese. Participants numbered 50–100 people. The organizers picked the nearest Saturday to July 8 for the event, which altogether took place 7 times (1989–1995) (Schønfelder 1993, 1994). The leader, vicar Otto Odland, described the event to me as a commemoration of the history of Bergen and its contacts with Britain, stressing “the sun

³ My sources for this are Ragnvald Berge and Borgny Dam-Nielsen (personal communications).

which rose in the west,” an allusion to Sunniva, but even more to the Celtic mission which brought Christianity to the country. Odland indicated that he and the other priests were inspired by their reading about Celtic Christianity at the time, particularly how Celtic bishops went into the streets and talked to people about God. Lack of initiative brought an end to the arrangement after 1995.⁴

Roman Catholic Interest in Selja

Paradoxically, Selja and Sunniva now seem to have become more important to Lutherans and people in general than to Roman Catholics. The history of the Roman Catholic Church in Norway after the Reformation dates back to the nineteenth century. The first congregation was founded in 1842–43 (Eidsvig 1993:57). Followers of Catholicism were quite few until the 1960s and 1970s, when it became popular among Norwegian intellectuals, and Catholic immigrants started to arrive in substantial numbers.⁵

Neither St. Sunniva nor St. Olav is mentioned in the *Ordo Secundum Calendarium Romanum Generale*, which specifies the saints all Catholics should venerate. The manual for Catholic priests in Norway, however, does list St. Sunniva as one of the saints with a remembrance day to be celebrated. Also, the Catholic prayer book contains a mass text about the saint. In 1930 the Catholic Church got its first titular bishop of Selja.

In the city of Bergen there is a mass on Seljumannamesse July 8 in the Catholic congregation of St. Paul. Nevertheless, it varies

⁴ In 2000, the Bergen Chamber of Commerce and Industry established a Sunniva prize aimed at promising female managers working in trade, industry, or organizations. The reasons given for the choice of this name for the prize were Sunniva's connection to Bergen as the city's patron saint, as well as the admirable character of her figure.

⁵ In 1992 the Roman Catholic Church of Norway had 31 642 registered members. In addition, some 15 000 Catholics were not registered (Tande 1993:474). In 2003 there were 44 141 registered members, according to the Catholic diocese of Oslo.

how much Sunniva or Selja is emphasized during service. Being the patron saint of the congregation, she is represented in a stained-glass picture as well as by a painting in the church building. To me it was stressed that St. Sunniva is not an object of devotion, except for some few individuals perhaps. Instead, Sunniva and Selja are valued for historical and cultural reasons. No initiatives towards a common pilgrimage to the island have been taken here. The Bergen congregation is quite large, numbering about 4000 members (Børtnes 2000:124), more than half of whom are first generation immigrants from Chile, Sri Lanka and Vietnam, and naturally their interest in Norwegian church history is minimal.

Signs of a new Catholic interest in Selja occasionally appear. In 1993 two Benedictine monks — one of them a Norwegian convert — celebrated mass in the cave chapel for the first time since the 15th century. In the last few years Catholics from Ålesund and neighbouring cities have organized an annual pilgrimage to the island around the time of Seljumannamesse, culminating in a service at the site. The event is announced in the Bergen congregation and elsewhere.

The National Symbol

Selja's connection with royalty and the early Christianization process makes it a national symbol. The idea of Norway as a Christian country, i.e., the fusion between the national and the Christian inheritance, has been very influential in Norwegian society, and still is. Theologian Inge Lønning comments on how the sumptuous celebration of St. Olav's day (Olsok) in Trondheim in 1930 was felt like an overwhelming revelation by prominent participants. The anniversary marked the death of king Olav Haraldsson in the battle of Stiklestad in 1030, a violent death which very soon became the "birth" of the national saint, the *rex perpetuus Norvegiae*, Norway's eternal king. In his lifetime the king ruthlessly transformed the country into a Christian monarchy, after his death his former enemies made him a saint. What particularly impressed the participants at Stiklestad in 1930, according to Lønning, was the

manifestation of the invisible Christian *nation*. They discovered a common, Christian unity which had been there all the time, but went unnoticed in the turbulent period between the wars, buried under the daily battles between various social and ideological factions (Lønning 1981:162).

St. Sunniva's function in Olav Tryggvason's Christianization project makes her and Selja fitted for a national symbolic role analogous to that of St. Olav and Stiklestad, although on a smaller scale, and without the constitutional aspect connected with the king. Interestingly, "the Christian nation" thereby gets a saintly, heroic mother as well as a father, something which fits nicely in with an age where equality between the sexes has been a major issue. In the twentieth century, two major anniversaries manifested the fusion of nationhood and the Christian church with Selja and Sunniva as symbolic vehicles.

Selja's role as the first centre of Norway's western diocese was celebrated on a grand scale in 1968, at the 900th anniversary of this ecclesiastical establishment. On August 11 Selja had the attention of the whole nation. The festivity programme comprised a service and a "folk meeting" in the ruins, with 10 000 people present. Speeches were given by the king, the prime minister, and a bishop from the Faeroe Islands. Greetings from far and near were presented. Radio transmission and newspaper reports made it into a truly national event. Judging from the anniversary programme, however, St. Sunniva was hardly mentioned.⁶

On the next festive occasion Sunniva certainly was to get her due. In the 1990s the state church started the celebrations of its 1000 years anniversary, called "The Church in Norway 1000 Years." Celebrations will continue from 1995 to 2030. This grand

⁶ See *Program Selje-jubiléet. Bjørgvin bispestol 900 år. August 11, 1968*. A book about the history of the diocese, edited by the bishop Per Juvkam, gave the saint a scholarly tribute, however, including an erudite discussion of when the Sunniva cult became successful: Johnsen 1968.

jubilee has contributed substantially to the public focus on Selja, whose importance is often stressed. The first and most impressive official celebration was held on June 2–5 (Whitsuntide), 1995, on the island of Moster, where Olav Tryggvason is said to have celebrated mass for the first time on Norwegian soil. Moster was never nearly as important as Selja in the history of the Church, and it was argued that Selja, “the womb which gave birth to the Norwegian church” (Hommedal 1995:143), should have been chosen as a more appropriate symbolic place for the main celebration. In 1996–1997, however, it was Selja’s turn to commemorate the past on a grand scale, the climax being a grand ecumenical service on Seljumannamesse July 7. The titular Catholic bishop of Selja, a clergyman from Sarajevo in Bosnia, was invited to the occasion along with several other church dignitaries.

The great anniversary was prepared for years by bishops, high-level church officials, scholars and many other prominent people. Research funds stimulated new interdisciplinary work on Old Norse religion and the country’s conversion to Christianity.⁷ It resulted in much attention being given to Selja and fresh contributions from archaeologists, religious scholars, historians, etc.⁸ Scholars have thus in different ways given depth to the historical and spiritual landscape. Their ideas and discussions have been disseminated through the mass media and have thus fed curiosity and speculations about the site. Willingly or unwillingly, they are participants in the revival of the shrine.

In Selje, people started to prepare for the anniversary early in the 1990s. The official ten persons board planning the local events numbered two bishops, one prioress from the Roman Catholic Church, high-standing district and county officials, and the managing director of Selje Hotel. The board declared the purpose of the celebrations to be “knowledge, information, and experiences connected to

⁷ See the anniversary publication, *Gjør døren høy: Kirken i Norge 1000 år*.

⁸ See Rindal 1997, and the recent article by Rekdal (2003).

Selja as a powerful centre during the Christianization of Norway,” and the basic framework of the celebrations to be “woman as a principal force,” and “the role of the coast and coastal culture in the development of church life and cultural life in Norway” (*1000-års jubileet i Selje. Juli 1996–Mai 1997*). The national scale of the anniversary notwithstanding, such proclamations echo the general trend of celebrating local history and its heroic figures as a kind of local identity-construction. In the modern world the past is integral to the making of identity, on personal, communal and national levels, as David Lowenthal and others have stressed (Lowenthal 1999:41–46).

The board’s emphasis on the broad, cultural scope of the anniversary, ignoring religious themes like salvation and belief in Christ, is noteworthy. The agenda was as much directed to people with loose or no personal ties to Christianity. In fact, the emphasis on the role of women must have affronted many conservative believers. The anniversary was obviously meant to concern everyone with an interest in history and culture, not just religious people. In the Norwegian context this inclusive, secular, even feminist orientation of the anniversary is in no way a matter of course.⁹

Sunniva is the only female figure of great importance in Norwegian church history apart from the Virgin Mary. The wide scope of

⁹ The Lutheran state church still comprises about 85% percent of the population, but the majority shows little interest in traditional religious matters and only go to service on Christmas Eve and family occasions such as weddings, christenings, and confirmations. Among the regular churchgoers there are sub-groups and factions. The old dividing line between liberal and conservative theologians is reflected in the local congregations where one can find more liberal-minded people as well as conservative evangelicals. Even within the latter group there are differences in orientation, but concern for foreign missions, individual salvation, and loyalty to the Bible characterize the group as a whole. For the last 200 years they have played a very influential part in Norwegian church history. Their proclaimed identity as “the true church” within the state church has made deep dividing lines in local communities and contributed to the estrangement of many people from the Church.

the anniversary opened the way for the old saint without engaging the theological difficulties related to saints in a Protestant context. Instead, the feminine aspect was stressed. One may talk of a growing Sunniva renaissance that has been greatly stimulated by the anniversary. The old story is retold in different texts and contexts, emphasizing Sunniva the martyr, the Christian ideal, the feminine model, the brave heroine, or the Celtic virgin whose martyrdom transformed the cruel oppressors of the Celts into fellow Christians. Many meanings can be attached to her figure, which has released a considerable amount of artistic creations. An attractive anniversary manual for schoolteachers includes a Sunniva song, which has been performed several times in the mass media.¹⁰ The last time it was heard on TV, the popular artist Karoline Krüger appeared singing it in the Sunniva cave. A new musical drama staging the legend was performed in 2000 in the cathedral in Molde, and was repeated in Spjelkavik in 2001. The instrumentation intended to give an Irish feeling to the music (Balsnes 2001; Djupvik 2002).¹¹ In 2003 the female vocal quartet Smyr issued the record *St. Sunniva*, a “musical painting” of the saint combining Norwegian folk music, Gregorian church music, and jazz (Walgermo 2003). Even a popular novel about Sunniva has appeared recently (Lerum 2002). In Selje Hotel the conference room was transformed into a Sunniva assembly hall in 1992, displaying a permanent exhibition of pictures of the saint. The legend is rendered in a cartoon (Risholm 1991), while an art gallery in Selje offers quality lithographs of the saint made by a local artist.¹² Especially women seem to be drawn to the figure of Sunniva.

¹⁰ Roald 1996. In English the title of the manual would be: “The cave of Sunniva: a womb that bore the Norwegian church.”

¹¹ The title of the piece is “Må korsets tre slå rot” (“Let the tree of the cross strike roots”). The lyrics were written by Eivind Skeie, and the music composed by Odd Johan Overøye (Djupvik 2002).

¹² Galleri Amdam, formerly Seljetunet.

Female Advocates of Sunniva

From the bibliography of this paper it will be seen that Selja and Sunniva have caught the interest of authors, local historians and a variety of other people for decades. Nobel Prize laureate in literature Sigrid Undset (1882–1949), who became a Roman Catholic in 1924, was fascinated by the place and its legend. She wrote her own pious version of the Sunniva story, published in German in 1932. Undset's conversion was sensational in a society rather hostile to Catholicism, and no Norwegian publisher could be found for the book. Undset wanted to build a cottage for herself on Selja in the 1920s, but her plans were refused by the local authorities, who feared the place would develop into a Catholic centre. The cigar-smoking, impressive lady was perhaps an object of fear herself in the small, rural community.

In 2000 Sigrid Undset's book was issued at last in Norwegian, under the title *Den hellige Sunniva*. The publisher was a Selje woman, Borgny Dam-Nielsen, who runs a small publishing firm in the area.

A frequent Selja visitor since early childhood, Dam-Nielsen is herself the author of a children's book about the island (Dam-Nielsen 1987). In a women's magazine article Dam-Nielsen describes herself as a humanist and a seeker who is drawn to Selja for a variety of reasons, such as its silence, scenery, medieval and prehistoric atmosphere. The legend of Sunniva has been a constant fascination to her since early childhood, and she repeats the idea of Sunniva as the mother of the Norwegian church, a figure representing female values in contrast to the tough masculine mentality of the Vikings (Toft 2000).

A female minister of the Norwegian state church, Lise Tostrup, recommends frustrated women to look to the *patrona Norvegiae* for inspiration and strength. In her imaginative article, Tostrup outlines how the figure of Sunniva — and even Celtic Christianity in general — is a source of inspiration and power to women (Tostrup 1997). Her argument synthesizes popular agendas: women's spiritu-

ality, power and revolt against patriarchy, the longing for peace and new ways of living together. It illustrates how the legend can function as a spiritual myth to modern women. In Tostrup's vision Selja becomes a reminder of Sunniva's female strength.

The fact that Sunniva in all probability is a legendary figure without any historical foundation is stressed only in scholarly contexts. Ignoring the question of historical truth, Sunniva is located somewhere between history and myth. People in general do not think of her as a fictional character. Instead, she has become part of a mysterious, misty age centuries ago, about which no one any longer has any certain knowledge. Sigrid Undset, who was a learned woman, well schooled in archaeology and the history of the Middle Ages, imagined there was a possibility that the legend describes real events. According to her Catholic world-view, nothing in the story is absolutely improbable (Undset 2000:39–40; Hommedal 1996:52). One of the guides at Selja informed me that the way she chose to tell the legend clearly had an effect on the visitors. If she gave a spirited presentation without dwelling too much on the historically doubtful elements, a special atmosphere would be created that made the story more truthful. People seem to like the idea that the story is true. Novelist Vera Henriksen reflects on the truth of legends in her book about Selja, *Selja og Stad — legender, sagn, historie* (1992), attacking the black-and-white attitude of modern people for whom a story is either true or false. Even if they cannot be historically verified, Henriksen treasures legends as sources of existential truth (1992:12). Such openness to symbolic and existential meaning makes the question of historical reality less relevant. At the same time the door is left ajar for conceiving Sunniva as a historical person.

The artistic, symbolic and legendary space created around the icon of Sunniva is somehow complemented by Selja's ruins and scenery. At the same time her figure infuses the landscape with spiritual meaning. Selja becomes Sunniva's particular space in this unfolding of symbolic dialectics. A genderized body symbolism is even attributed to the island: Selja has become "the womb" of the

Norwegian church. This metaphor is repeated in many texts of the past few years. Basic meanings are integrated in the womb symbolism: the origin of the Norwegian church, the sacred site with its “feminine” environmental features (cave and spring), and the self-sacrifice of the female saint fulfilling the paradigmatic life-sprouting potential of a martyr death. The monastic ruins, bearing witness to bygone religious industry and fervour, are impressive, but apparently the history of the monastery can offer no moving stories and colourful figures able to personify the place in the same way as Sunniva does. Together with the Seljumen the monks have receded into the background.

Business Needs

Many European pilgrimage centres serve multiple purposes, Nolan and Nolan mention conferences, retreats, youth encampments, weddings, baptisms, concerts, and exhibitions of religious art as typical activities associated with shrines (1989:11).¹³ In Selje, the tourist industry obviously has a vital interest in promoting the old site. Selje Hotel, a good hotel in the middle of the village, dating from 1975, is the main tourist enterprise. Sunniva and Selja are important objects in the marketing of the hotel. Among the attractions of Selje in the summer of 1998, for instance, was an offer directed to marrying couples to have their marriage ceremony in the ruins and celebrate the wedding in the Sunniva assembly hall at the hotel. The female owner and managing director, Gerd Kjellaug Berge, was, as I said before, a member of the official board preparing the anniversary celebrations in 1996–1997. Berge is a highly respected professional in her trade, the first female pres-

¹³ In Chapter 6 of his *Religion in Contemporary Japan* (1991) Ian Reader describes the “web of commercial enterprises” (136) surrounding famous pilgrimage shrines in Japan, like souvenir shops and restaurants. Sometimes the neighbouring streets become veritable shopping streets. In Japan tourism and pilgrimage are interlocked.

ident of the national organization of hotel and restaurant owners (Norges Hotell- og Restaurantforbund). The emphasis on women and coastal culture in the anniversary programme is clearly in accord with Berge's views, as well as with the profile and interests of the hotel. Special courses ("Selje Aktiv") aimed primarily at women have been a regular offer by the hotel, featuring such elements as aroma-therapy, colour analysis, massage and positive thinking-seminars, in other words, elements with a New Age flavour. Tours of the ruins are included in such packet-deals. Berge often emphasizes the spiritual and cultural requirements of modern tourists and how they can be met by the treasures found at Selje, such as the ocean, the monastery and Saint Sunniva.¹⁴ To me she expressed how vital it was for a hotel in such a remote place to be able to offer visitors unique experiences, and she was as conscious as any scholar of the experience-creating potential of stories like Sunniva's. The hotel director definitely belongs to the group of resource persons that stand behind the present resacralization process.¹⁵

As well, souvenirs in Selje bear witness to the commercial potentials of the legend. Sunniva is figuring in brochures, calendars, posters, books, and booklets, and on soaps, pins and ceramics.

Selja and the Pilgrimage Trend

The 1000 years anniversary has also nourished the recent pilgrimage trend in Norway. Obviously, this trend contributes substantially to the resacralization going on in relation to places like Selja. The old

¹⁴ For instance in *AndelsPosten*, no. 4, 1998 ("Gerd Kjellaug Berge: Tar gevinst av dårlig vær").

¹⁵ Recently the hotel has started to cooperate with St. Sunniva College, a private institution founded by Roald Flo in 2002. The college offers "holistic education" in management and personal development. While the head office is located in Oslo, Selje Hotel is a sort of campus where seminars and education programs take place. (The information is based on Flo 2003 — a brochure about St. Sunniva College — and a personal interview with Flo.)

pilgrimage route between Oslo and Trondheim has been restored lately and was officially opened in 1997. For the first time in many centuries pilgrims are now walking towards Trondheim, which again has become the largest pilgrimage destination in the country.

According to the tourist office in Selje a considerable number of individual pilgrims and pilgrim groups visit the island during the summer season. It was pointed out that the number is increasing. No exact estimate could be stipulated though, since one cannot always tell whether a person is a pilgrim or not. As was noted above, it is also quite problematic to distinguish between pilgrims and tourists. To get an idea of the total number of visitors, it was estimated that about 6000 persons took the ferry from Selje to Selja each year during 1997–1999. This figure is based on the sale of ferry tickets in the summer season. Visitors may also hire boats, or go to Selja using their own boats. The site is not under guard and visitors are not controlled. The tourist office estimated in 2000 that Selja receives about 10 000 annual visitors, the large majority being Norwegians. In August 2002 the office said it had noticed an increase in British visitors. A pilgrimage group belonging to The Fraternity of the Friends of St. Alban's Abbey had visited the island in the summer of 2001, a sign of a growing awareness of the historical links in the UK as well. As yet there is no institution in Selje taking care of pilgrims, and the local church does not offer any kind of facilities for them.

A main force behind the revival of the pilgrimage tradition in Norway is the historian of religions, Eivind Luthen, who opened his own pilgrim's office (*Pilegrimskontoret*) in Oslo in 1994, selling pilgrimage books and requisites, and giving advice to wanderers. For many years Luthen has tried to influence local and central authorities to restore the old routes and centres of pilgrimage.¹⁶ Selja is one of his favourite objects, and he has published a book-

¹⁶ Luthen has met with great enthusiasm, and in 1996 he founded an organization of pilgrims, *Pilegrimsfelleskapet St. Jakob*, Norge.

let about the site (Luthen 1997). In his opinion the site is inadequate in its present, desolate state. Selja is a Sleeping Beauty (Luthen 1997:11). He wants to have the buildings rebuilt and filled with activities, so that Selja could become the Iona of Norway.¹⁷ At the moment that seems a distant scenario.

Seljumannamesse: The Ritual Revival of the Site

The local deanery now celebrates Seljumannamesse every year at Selja on the first Sunday in July. A pilgrimage tour on the island is organized immediately before the service, which otherwise is of a traditional Lutheran kind.¹⁸ The procession is lead by a woman dressed in a white robe representing Sunniva, and a dozen of male participants are wearing monk's habits — a theatrical device which recalls the historical plays now enacted everywhere in the country, many of them featuring well-known characters from the sagas. Despite their serious intentions, Seljumannamesse and its pilgrimage form

¹⁷ Luthen has also presented this idea in an article about Iona in his own pilgrim's magazine, *Pilegrimen* (formerly *Peregrinus*) (Luthen 1998), the central mouthpiece of the Norwegian pilgrimage movement.

¹⁸ During the pilgrimage procession the old Sunniva hymn is sung repeatedly. The Latin text of the hymn, which is printed in *Seljumannamesse program*, 2. juli 1995, is as follows:

*Aeterna Christi munera
lauda mater ecclesia
qui martyrum per vulnera
te stola vestit regia.*

*Regum descendens stipite
celi scandit ad atria:
sacro stipata milite
Sunniva regis filia.*

*Trino deo et simplici
laus honor virtus gloria
qui martyris multiplici
glorificat victoria.*

an ecclesiastical parallel to such popular dramas. In answer to my question about what kind of religious meaning they ascribe to the pilgrimage element, people point to the old tradition. They have taken up an old custom belonging to the place, and the feeling of resuscitating history is what makes it meaningful. One may see a bit of nostalgia for the country's Catholic past in such ritual proceedings. The Church encourages what could be called a Catholic-flirting topophilia, as was also the case with the Seljumannamesse processions in Bergen 1989–1995.

Normally about 300–400 people will attend Seljumannamesse, depending on the weather. The large majority live in Selje and the surrounding district. But stray foreigners and enthusiasts from other parts of the country may turn up for the event as well.

It can be argued that the Church is celebrating itself as a time-honoured, cultural tradition through Seljumannamesse, the idea of tradition legitimating its theatrical, Catholic-inspired elements. The site itself is used by the Church to activate the legend, making the monument a part of the narration. Ritually Selja and Sunniva become a unity, as we have seen in other symbolic interpretations of the site. In today's Seljumannamesse therefore, the spatial and personified "womb" becomes ritually confirmed.¹⁹ It can be argued that in making location a ritual requisite in this way, a new sense of sacred space is created in a Lutheran context. This stands in contrast to the traditional view that God is met with everywhere and pilgrimage shrines therefore are superfluous.

Other Responses to the Site

There are a great variety of sacred places in the world, and their symbolic meanings may have little in common. The shared factor

¹⁹ Recently both the Sunniva element and the pilgrimage aspect have been reinforced. A pilgrimage in the local region is now organized some few days before Seljumannamesse, and there are concerts and other events. The total arrangement is now called "Seljumannamesse and Sunniva days."

related to sacred sites is restrictions on human behaviour (Hubert 1994:11). Selja's status as a sacred site is officially guaranteed by being a national monument protected by legislation as well as a consecrated ground where church rituals take place. But how is the place experienced? What do people feel or think about Selja?

The role of Sunniva herself has already been pointed out, but the saint is not equally important to all respondents. Often the character of the site is also emphasized. When Eivind Luthen stated to me what he personally thought about the sacredness of Selja, he mentioned creation or nature, the feeling of "being part of something greater than oneself," besides cult continuity from pagan to Christian times. Luthen thinks there was a cult of the great goddess Freya at Selja in the pre-Christian period. Curiously enough he made no mention of either Sunniva or the cave. In his booklet he declares that at Selja today one meets above all the "nature cathedral" of the Stad area (1997:51).

His comments are representative of a number of people, who, without caring too much about legendary or historical details, experience the mystique of a landscape expressing the integration of religious history and natural scenery. Several people use the word "special" to characterize the place. Its special atmosphere is a recurring comment. The figure of Sunniva, the cave, the ruins, and the natural surroundings seem to become all fused in the rather vague category of "specialness," which nevertheless serves to designate the place as unique, with spiritual qualities of some sort.

The desolate character of the spot may create a feeling of undisturbed access to the past. Selja becomes a place to make "time-trips": "With the tower of St. Alban's church still standing, complete and mighty, the place itself seems as if it is cut right out of old history," the well-known archaeologist Haakon Shetelig declared in a letter to the equally well-known art historian Harry Fett (Shetelig 1928). Both Shetelig and Fett were professionally involved in the restoration of the ruins at Selja. Shetelig goes on depicting their visit together to Selja in 1914, and how Fett awakened "the dead voices" from the ruins and conjured up the past life

in the monastery. He cites Fett's concluding remark when they were about to leave the island: "This is a holy place in Norway."

Borgny Dam-Nielsen declares that when visiting Selja, her perspective on life changes. It feels like going into another existence where the world can be seen from other viewpoints. At Selja she experiences a unity with past generations (Toft 2000). Such a sense of place is a common aspect of sites. Ian Reader remarks: "This sense of accessibility, and the notion of the site and route as places of unmediated meeting, of realisation and of access to something beyond the normal levels and frameworks of everyday existence, is a crucial aspect in all the pilgrimages we are looking at" (1993:21).

Reader also notes that pilgrimage has an individual, and individualizing, nature, which makes it personally relevant to participants (Reader 1993:21). The same could be said about many visitors to Selja. "Going to Selje changed my life," exclaims Ingeborg Moræus Hanssen, director of the municipal cinemas in Oslo. She explains how the visit made her rediscover and feel attached to her country, its culture and history (Hanssen 2002). Pop singer Hanne Krogh (a former winner of the European Song Contest) saw a big rainbow stretching from the island right up to heaven at her first meeting with Selja. The rainbow being a personal symbol to Krogh, she knew it indicated a special relationship to the place. Krogh has even written a song to Sunniva which is included on one of her albums (Krogh 2002).

As was the case in the early history of Selja, environmental features still seem to be the most important elements of the site. There is a constant tradition that the spring's water has healing powers, as well as being rejuvenating. The water is taken away and used for baptisms, especially if the child is going to be called Sunniva.²⁰ Surprisingly many people say they have a strange, exalted feeling

²⁰ It is not local people but persons from other parts of the country who are taking baptismal water with them, according to the secretary at the tourist office in Selje.

in the cave, and it has become quite common to light candles there. It sometimes happens that people crawl on their knees the 40 steps leading up to the cave (the biblical symbolism of the number was repeatedly pointed out to me). Old people tell the tourist guides that they have dreamt of visiting the site for years.

“All sites of pilgrimage have this in common: they are believed to be places where miracles once happened, still happen, and may happen again,” declare the Turners (1978:6). Tales of visions and miracles at Selja seem to be rare, but it should be pointed out that no one has systematically tried to collect such material recently. Borgny Dam-Nielsen is conscious of a mysterious quality of the site, and has talked to people claiming to have been miraculously healed by the water in the spring. She has also heard of sailors receiving inexplicable help, another testimony to the continuity of the old traditions (Dam-Nielsen 1999; Toft 2000). The churchwarden told me about a teacher who had visited the site many years ago with a group of sectarians. On entering the cave they had felt a hostile presence, and when the teacher put his hand on the stone altar in St. Michael’s church, a mighty force had pulled him away. The morale of the story was that the episode had brought the teacher back to the state church. The churchwarden, who had heard the story from the teacher himself, emphasized that this kind of experience would generally not be spoken about. Such reticence was also underlined by the skipper on the ferry between Selje and Selja. He functions as a tourist guide on the island, and has observed visitors’ reactions to the place since 1993. The skipper as well knows of strange incidents. A lady visitor in 1999 had informed him that her son was recently saved at sea outside Stad in a mysterious manner. He was overcome by fog, and having no radar in his boat he was getting desperate, when suddenly he discerned a distant light. Heading towards it, he after a while landed at the shore of Selja, where he saw the light coming from a peep-hole in the tower. When he entered the building, it proved to be empty. The lady had been very serious about the story, stressing that her son was an engineer and not a person inclined to mystery.

Needless to say, such tales testify to the existence of divine forces at work at the site. Naturally they may serve to support belief in the old legend and its saint.

The skipper as well as other guides have noticed persons talking about the energies of the site, which could be an indication of New agers or neopagans among the visitors. Both the female figure of Sunniva as well as the possibility of a pre-Christian cult in the cave might be expected to attract alternative-minded people seeking Goddess energies at old shrines.²¹ So far these groups have not publicly adopted Selja. Nobody seems to have registered any signs of pagan worship on the site.

Pluralistic Diversity

Selja's present character as a sacred place becomes clearer if it is compared with its position during the Middle Ages. At that time the Catholic religious system embraced the cave, explained its hierophany and encouraged visitors. Today, different kinds of people with various interests and orientations are maintaining Selja as a national monument, a tourist attraction, an archaeological site, and a religious site.

How the sacredness of the place is experienced today, if it is experienced at all, is more or less an individual matter for modern visitors, be they pilgrims, scholars, holiday travellers, New agers or local Christians. Though essentially a Christian monument, the symbolic landscape also has links to Old Norse religion, national history, nature spirituality, and spirituality with a feminist bent. Some may value a Celtic or British connection for the site. Other links may also arise, depending on the religious development or scholarly hypotheses.

²¹ See for instance Deana Weibel's articles about New Age pilgrims to the French Marian shrine Rocamadour (Weibel 2002a, 2002b). New agers, or religious creatives as Weibel prefers to call them, tend to understand all ancient shrines, independent of their religious belonging, as places radiating beneficial energies.

The individual is free to make her own special blend of links or define what significance the place has for her. The Selja type of sacred site has a rich symbolic potential and may create a range of different responses in a pluralistic and individualistic society. A similar "plethora of reasons for specialness" is emphasized by Marion Bowman concerning the English spiritual centre Glastonbury (1993:40). Collective, institutionalized meaning is above all propagated by the Lutheran state church through its celebration of Seljumannamesse.

Selja's symbolic richness accords with the interests of the tourist industry, which can offer a piece of Christian heritage as well as a site with a message for everybody, depending on one's preferences. There is a seriousness connected to the martyr figure of Sunniva, but the beautiful maiden is at the same time a touristic *genius loci*. The emphasis on Sunniva is in line with main trends both within and outside the Church that are preoccupied with female symbols and women's relationship to religion.

Conclusion

The basis for the present resacralization process attached to Selja consists of history, legend and the experiential merits of the site itself. The process is expressed through church ritual, art, music, literature, commodification, and a host of articles in the media. Beside the general interest in women's history and female models, reasons for the increasing focus on St. Sunniva are national church anniversaries, as well as the more prosaic purposes of the tourist industry. Today, Selja and Sunniva are symbolically fused; the revival of the legend has absorbed the monastic ruins as a narrative scene. The state church contributes substantially to such a fusion by celebrating Seljumannamesse on the island, while the local community has become aware of the Selja-Sunniva connection as an identity source and tourist magnet. All in all Selja has been re-established as a powerful and mysterious sanctuary. At the same time the legend is incorporated in new stories mixing past

and present: tales about cult continuity, spiritual renewal, female identity and values, and personal narratives proving the existence and intervention of sacred forces at selected places.

Making prophecies for the future is not a scholarly task, but in this case it is tempting to speculate. Whereas the symbolic union of Selja and Sunniva has demonstrated its attraction, the site is still undeveloped. Will there be a growth in religious ideas, rituals and other activities connected to the site? Will the Celtic link expand in the future? Various new initiatives are indeed emerging. Greek Orthodox monks have become enthused with the island and want to build a monastery there, being warmly welcomed by the chairman of the local council (Bjønness 2003). Selja's basically Christian status probably restricts its potential as a pagan sanctuary, but it definitely meets the requirements of the seeker mentality characteristic of western, religious individualism. In fact Selja is another demonstration of how relevant locality is for such trends.²²

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ERKUNDUNGEN VON GEGENWELTEN:
ZUR ORIENTIERUNGSLEISTUNG «MYTHISCHER» REISEN
AM BEISPIEL ZWEIER MESOPOTAMISCHER TEXTE*

DARIA PEZZOLI-OLGIATI

Summary

The present article focuses on the function of mythic journeys with regard to the problem of death and the transience of human life in two selected Mesopotamian literary sources: the *Gilgamesh-Epic* IX–XI and the *Descent of Ishtar to the Underworld*. The selected texts are analysed and compared from the perspective of a functionalist definition of religious symbol systems, with particular attention to the transformation involved in travelling through different cosmic regions. The structure of the journey, the characterisation of the different regions visited by the protagonist, and the changes provoked by the mythic travel evince similarities and differences in the strategies employed to produce a religious orientation dealing with the ineluctable limits of life.

[Den Tod fürchtete ich und nun laufe ich durch die
Steppe].

Die Situation meines Freundes [lastet] auf mir.

[Einen fernen Weg laufe ich durch] die Steppe,

Die Situation Enkidus, [meines Freundes, lastet
auf mir].

[Eine ferne Strasse] laufe ich durch die Steppe.

[Wie könnte ich schweigen], wie könnte ich still sein?

[Mein Freund, den ich liebe], [wur]de zu Lehm,

Enkidu, den ich liebe, [wur]de zu Lehm.

[Und ich — werde ich nicht wie] er [sein] und (wie
er) liegen,

[ohne aufzu]stehen, für immer?¹

* Dieser Aufsatz stellt eine schriftliche Bearbeitung meiner Antrittsvorlesung als Privatdozentin für Religionswissenschaft an der Universität Zürich vom 26.5.2003 dar.

¹ *Gilg.* X, 62–71 nach der Ausgabe von George 2003:680–83.

1. Einführung

Die Vergänglichkeit menschlichen Lebens und die Reise eines Helden in ferne Gebiete sind die zentralen Motive dieses Zitats aus dem *Gilgamesh-Epos*. Diese Verbindung zwischen dem Tod als Grundproblem menschlichen Daseins und einer ausserordentlichen Reise in unzugängliche Gebiete sind Gegenstand der vorliegenden religionswissenschaftlichen Analyse. Anhand zweier ausgewählter Beispiele aus der mesopotamischen Literatur werde ich die Leistung solcher Reisen angesichts unkontrollierbarer Phänomene des menschlichen Lebens fokussieren.

Die Auseinandersetzung mit dieser Thematik ist in vier Abschnitte aufgeteilt: In einem ersten Schritt steht die Frage im Zentrum, inwiefern literarische Berichte von mythischen Reisen eine Grundorientierung im Rahmen eines religiösen Symbolsystems leisten können. In zwei weiteren, parallel durchgeführten Schritten werden die ausgewählten Textquellen — Auszüge aus dem *Gilgamesh-Epos* und *Ishtars Abstieg in die Unterwelt* — mit dieser Fragestellung konfrontiert. Abschliessend werden die Beispiele einem Vergleich unterzogen.

2. Mythische Reisen zwischen Welten und Gegenwelten

Das Motiv der Reise von Göttern oder Heroen in ferne, schwer zugängliche Gebiete wird in verschiedenen mesopotamischen Texten aufgegriffen. Dabei spielt die Überschreitung der Grenze zwischen dem Bereich der Lebenden und jenem der Toten häufig eine zentrale Rolle.² In den ausgewählten Textbeispielen findet eine explizite Auseinandersetzung mit dem Tod statt. Ist es gerechtfertigt, diese Texte als «religiös» relevant zu qualifizieren, nur weil sie den Tod und die Vergänglichkeit des Lebens thematisieren? Welche

² Dazu vgl. Bottéro 1980. Als weiteres Beispiel vgl. die Geschichte von *Nergal und Ereshkigal*. In diesem Zusammenhang könnten auch die *Unterweltsvisionen eines assyrischen Kronprinzen* aufschlussreich sein; vgl. von Soden 1936.

Merkmale machen diese Unterfangen von Göttern und Heroen zu «mythischen» Reisen? Um einen kontrollierten methodischen Zugang zu den Textquellen zu gewährleisten, werden hier zunächst diese Definitionsprobleme angesprochen.

2.1. «Religiöse» Texte

Die hier verfolgte Fragestellung fokussiert die Orientierungsleistung altorientalischer Erzählungen von besonderen Reisen, in denen Aspekte des Todes thematisiert werden. Es erscheint berechtigt, die ausgewählten Texte als «religiös» zu bezeichnen und zwar aus folgendem Grund: «Religiös» wird hier im Sinne eines rekonstruktiven Bemühens und in Anlehnung an leistungsorientierte, funktionale Religionsdefinitionen verwendet. Dieser Begriff setzt in diesem Kontext also voraus, dass religiöse Symbolsysteme Kommunikationssysteme sind, die eine Grundorientierung vermitteln. Für die vorliegende Fragestellung erweisen sich die Zugänge von Geertz,³ Luhmann⁴ und Stolz als besonders aufschlussreich. Letztgenannten zitiere ich mit folgender Definition, welche die beiden anderen Zugangsweisen rezipiert: «Überall steht der Mensch vor der Aufgabe, seine Welt, die offen und nicht festgelegt ist, zu ordnen und zu kontrollieren; überall ist er mit Mächten konfrontiert, die sich dieser Kontrolle entziehen (. . .); an dieser Stelle sind die religiösen Probleme angesiedelt. Es geht darum, dem Bereich des Unkontrollierbaren eine Form zu geben, mit der sich umgehen lässt. Dabei wird einerseits Unkontrollierbares in die Kontrolle übergeführt, andererseits aber doch wieder belassen; Religion leistet also eine gleichzeitige Darstellung der unkontrollierbaren lebensbestimmenden Mächte und der kontrollierbaren Lebensordnung, die darin gründet».⁵ Obwohl für andere Gesellschaftstypen entwickelt, können funktionale Zugänge zu religiösen Symbolsystemen interessante

³ Vgl. Geertz 1999:48.

⁴ Vgl. Luhmann 1992:9–71; s. auch Reese-Schäfer 2001:96–110.

⁵ Stolz 2001a:33; s. auch Stolz 2001b.

Betrachtungsweisen auch für traditionelle, nicht vergleichbar ausdifferenzierte Gesellschaften eröffnen.

Es soll hier versucht werden, diese Art von Zugang auf altorientalische, literarische Traditionen anzuwenden, in denen der Tod als unkontrollierbare Grenze des Lebens reflektiert wird. In der Arbeit an den Texten wird folglich die Frage zu beantworten sein, wie diese doppelte Orientierungsfunktion realisiert wird, durch die das Unkontrollierbare einerseits kontrollierbar gemacht und andererseits so belassen wird.

2.2. Welt und Gegenwelten

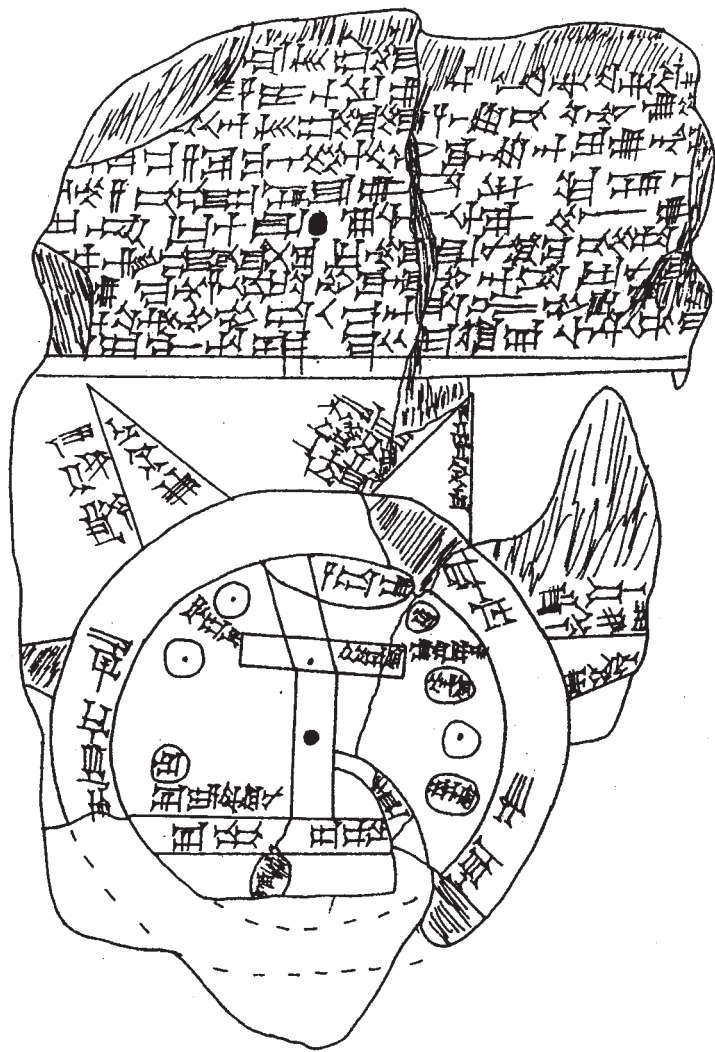
In der altorientalischen Literatur erstrecken sich Reisen von Göttern und Heroen häufig über verschiedene Gebiete, die unter normalen Bedingungen nicht zugänglich sind. Die Etappen dieser Reisen verbinden in der Regel kosmologische Bereiche, die voneinander getrennt sind.⁶ Der Weg führt von bekannten, vertrauten zu unbekannten, unheimlichen Orten, die nur in der ausserordentlichen Situation der Reise erkundet werden können. Mit anderen Worten: Die Reisen von Hereon und Göttern spielen sich zwischen *Welt* und *Gegenwelten*⁷ ab.

Diese moderne Kategorisierung von Orten, die hier auf alte literarische Quellen projiziert wird, ist bereits in altmesopotamischen Dokumenten angedeutet; wenn auch auf einer impliziten Ebene, lassen sich Elemente einer Reflexion über die Bedeutung und Kennzeichnung von verschiedenen, gegensätzlichen Gegenden im Kosmos in vielen Quellen erkennen. Eine aufschlussreiche Illustration einer expliziten Trennung zwischen bekannten und unbekannten kosmologischen Gebieten, zwischen Welt und Gegenwelten im mesopotamischen Kontext bietet die sogenannte *Babylonische Weltkarte*, die hier kurz besprochen wird.⁸

⁶ Zu diesem Motiv s. Marinatos 2001; Horowitz 1998:20ff.; Katz 2003:32–55.

⁷ Dazu vgl. Stolz 2001a:94–100 und Stolz 1993.

⁸ Damit möchte ich keine direkte literarische Verbindung zwischen den erwähnten Quellen suggerieren. Die Weltkarte ist relativ jung — sie wird in die



BM 92687 obv., aus: Horowitz 1998:402.

Es handelt sich um die erste «geographische Karte», welche die Welt in ihrer Gesamtheit darstellt.⁹ Sie reproduziert in kleinem Massstab den Kosmos aus der Perspektive der Stadt Babylon, die im Zentrum als Rechteck mit dem sumerischen Name *tintir*¹⁰ gekennzeichnet ist.¹¹ Die Karte weist eine Nord-Süd-Orientierung auf. Städte und Landschaftselemente werden durch symbolische Zeichen wiedergegeben. Auch die übrigen Städte und Gebiete sind in der Regel mit Eigennamen erwähnt. Weitere topographische Elemente werden jedoch nur allgemein als Berg, Sumpf oder Kanal identifiziert. So kann auch der Euphrat, der in der Mitte der Karte plziert ist, nur aufgrund seiner geographischen Lage überhaupt als solcher erkannt werden. Der Mittelteil der Weltkarte gibt im Wesentlichen die Geographie Mesopotamiens wieder, und zwar aus der Sicht der Grossstadt Babylon, die als Mittelpunkt des Kosmos interpretiert wird.¹² Das Landgebiet ist von einem Ring umgeben, der als *mar-ratum*, «Meer, Ozean», gekennzeichnet ist. Das Meer fungiert dabei als Grenzbereich: Es trennt die vertraute Welt von entfernten, nur

Zeitspanne zwischen dem 8. und dem 7. Jh. v.Chr. datiert (vgl. Horowitz 1998:25f.) — während die Traditionen um das *Gilgamesh-Epos* und *Inannas bzw. Ishtars Abstieg in die Unterwelt* über breite Zeitspannen bezeugt sind. Das Problem möglicher Abhängigkeit muss hier offen gelassen werden.

⁹ Eine Ausgabe der Karte und der beiliegenden Texte bei Horowitz 1998:20ff.; Horowitz 1988; Peiser 1889.

¹⁰ Dazu Unger 1928. Über die zahlreichen Namen der Stadt Babylon s. auch die Komposition *TINTIR* = *Babylon*; für eine Ausgabe dieses Werkes vgl. George 1992:1–72.

¹¹ Zur Kartographie in Mesopotamien vgl. Bleibtreu 1986; Heinrich u. Seidl 1967; Meissner 1925; Röllig 1980–1983; Unger 1935.

¹² In diesem Zusammenhang ist die Auslassung des Tigris aussagekräftig; vgl. Horowitz 1998:28f. und vor allem Huxley 1997:190: «The map includes real aspects of Mesopotamian life, river, mountains, marsh, cities, but is not the kind of map that would be used to guide a traveller. Rather, it is a cosmological diagram, a statement about the world, about the mythic regions that impinge on the world, and about human perception of the centrality of Babylon and the Land of the Two Rivers within the world».

wenig bekannten Bereichen. Diese sind durch die Dreiecke am Rand der Karte repräsentiert und tragen die Bezeichnung *nagû*, «entferntes Gebiet».¹³ Die Kenntnisse über diese Orte, die sich jenseits des Meeres, also jenseits der bewohnten Welt, befinden, sind spärlich. Einerseits gibt die Karte selbst hierzu einige Hinweise. Eines der *nagû* wird beispielsweise wie folgt beschrieben: «Grosse Mauer, 6 Meilen, wo Shamash nicht gesehen wird». Andererseits werden diese Gegenden durch zwei (leider fragmentarische) Texte präzisiert, die auf der gleichen Tafel aufgezeichnet sind.¹⁴ Es handelt sich demnach um kaum erreichbare Gebiete, die mit mythischen Gestalten in Zusammenhang gebracht werden.¹⁵ Die Angaben zu den *nagû* sind fragmentarisch; die Räume jenseits des Meeres, die äussersten Bereiche des Kosmos, sind geheimnisvoll und nicht leicht fassbar.¹⁶ Die *Babylonische Weltkarte* beabsichtigt, die Zentralität der Stadt Babylon kosmologisch und theologisch zu untermauern. Die Erwähnung der *nagû*, der unerreichbaren Gebiete, betont die Vorrangstellung der Stadt nochmals: Babylon befindet sich nicht nur im Mittelpunkt der bekannten Welt, sondern auch im Zentrum des gesamten Kosmos.¹⁷ Dieser Kosmos besteht aus verschiedenen Bereichen, die jenseits der Reichweite der Grossstadt liegen. Die Karte zeigt somit auch auf, dass solch ferne Welten überhaupt existieren, dass sie zum Kosmos gehören und man nur wenig darüber weiss, wie sie beschaffen sind und was sich dort abspielt.

¹³ Leider ist die Tafel beschädigt; es ist jedoch anzunehmen, dass ursprünglich acht Dreiecke auf ihr zu finden waren. Vgl. Horowitz 1998:30.

¹⁴ Es wäre denkbar, dass die Texte erst sekundär, in einer späteren Kopie mit der Karte verbunden wurden. Horowitz bereits 1988 führt jedoch einleuchtende Argumente zugunsten der Einheit des Dokuments an.

¹⁵ Vgl. *Babylonische Weltkarte*, Rs. 7f.: «[Zum drit]ten Gebiet, wo du sieben Meilen gehst . . . ein fliegender Vogel kann [seinen Weg] nicht zu Ende führen», s. auch Rs. 21'–23'.

¹⁶ Vgl. *Babylonische Weltkarte*, Rs. 26'–27': «[. . .] von den vier Richtungen der ganzen [. . .], [. . .]: deren Mitte niemand ver[steht]».

¹⁷ Zum Motiv von Babylon als Zentrum des Kosmos vgl. George 1997; Maul 1997; Pezzoli-Olgiaiti 2002:82–96; Westenholz 1998.

Auf der *Babylonischen Weltkarte* wird der Gegensatz zwischen Welt und Gegenwelt ikonographisch dargestellt und durch den Kontrast zwischen dem zentralen Kreis und den Dreiecken am äusseren Rand kartographisch repräsentiert.¹⁸ In den Texten hingegen, die Gegenstand der vorliegenden Untersuchung sind, wird der Gegensatz zwischen Welt und Gegenwelten in narrativen Strukturen entfaltet.

2.3. «Mythische» Reisen als Verbindung von Gegenwelten

Erzählungen von ausserordentlichen Reisen verbinden unterschiedliche kosmologische Gebiete; sie setzen diese in eine geordnete Struktur, die durch den Reiseweg bestimmt wird. In der narrativen Struktur der Erzählung verknüpfen solche Reisen wenig bekannte kosmologische Orte nach unterschiedlichen Mustern.¹⁹ Himmel, Erde, Unterwelt, abgelegene Inseln, Berge und der unterirdische Ozean werden dabei in geordnete Zusammenhänge gebracht. Die Reise erlaubt es, unterschiedliche Gegenwelten in komplexen Verbindungen zueinander zu bringen, ohne sie jedoch ihrer Eigentümlichkeit und Eigenständigkeit zu berauben; die verschiedenen Orte nähern sich einander an, werden aber nicht miteinander identifiziert.

Solche Reisen von Heroen und Göttern werden in der Regel als einmalig dargestellt. Sie entstehen unter ausserordentlichen Bedingungen, sind durch einen ungewohnten Weg charakterisiert. Als solche bringen sie grundsätzliche Veränderungen der Ausgangssituation mit sich, die nicht mehr rückgängig gemacht werden können. In diesem Sinne scheint es berechtigt, diese Reisen als «mythisch» zu bezeichnen, denn sie leiten Transformationen ein, die es erlauben, die bekannte, vertraute Weltdimension am Ende der Reise als

¹⁸ Zum Stellenwert der *Babylonischen Weltkarte* bei der Rekonstruktion mesopotamischer kosmologischer Konzepte s. Huxley 1997 und Pongratz-Leisten 2001: 274–277.

¹⁹ Vgl. Pongratz-Leisten 1994:13ff.; Pongratz-Leisten 2001; Stolz 2000; Marinatos 2001.

endgültiges Ergebnis eines unwiderruflichen Prozesses zu verstehen.²⁰

Die Frage nach der Leistung mythischer Reisen angesichts der Todes- und Vergänglichkeitsproblematik wird somit im Kontext eines religionswissenschaftlichen Ansatzes untersucht, der religiöse Symbolsysteme unter einem funktionalen Gesichtspunkt betrachtet. Dabei wird dem Gegensatz zwischen Welt und Gegenwelt und dessen provisorischer Aufhebung während der Reise besondere Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt. Nach diesen klärenden Bemerkungen möchte ich nun die Fragestellung an den ausgewählten Textquellen konkretisieren.

2.4. Zur Auswahl der Texte

In der klassischen Fassung des *Gilgamesh-Epos* spielt die Reisetematik eine wichtige Rolle. Hier konzentriere ich mich auf die Tafeln IX–XI, wo die Reise eng an das Motiv des Todes gekoppelt ist.²¹ Ähnlich wird der Blick auf *Ishtars Abstieg in die Unterwelt* gerichtet sein: Die Gesamterzählung wird vor allem bezüglich der Raumwechsel — mit besonderer Aufmerksamkeit auf die Beschreibungen der Unterwelt — untersucht. Beide Erzählungen weisen eine komplexe Entstehungsgeschichte auf: In der vorliegenden Untersuchung stehen die akkadischen Fassungen im Zentrum.²²

²⁰ Zum verwendeten Mythosbegriff vgl. dazu als erste Orientierung Assmann, Burkert u. Stolz 1982; Assmann u. Assmann 1998:180 (M4 funktionalistischer Mythosbegriff); Stolz 1997:50ff. Auf dem Hintergrund eines Vergleichs zwischen verschiedenen mediterranen und nahöstlichen literarischen Belegen prägt Marinatos 2001 den Begriff der «kosmischen Reise». Dieser Begriff betont die semantische Komponente der Reise, während die Bezeichnung «mythische Reise» die syntaktische Struktur, den Aufbau der implizierten Transformation hervorhebt.

²¹ Zu den verschiedenen Reisen, die im Epos vorkommen, s. als Bsp. Stolz 2000.

²² Für einen Überblick über die Entstehungsgeschichte des *Gilgamesh-Epos* vgl. George 2003:3–90 und Tigay 1982. Zum Verhältnis zwischen der sumerischen Erzählung *Inannas Abstieg in die Unterwelt* und der akkadischen *Ishtars Abstieg in die Unterwelt* s. Hutter 1985:116–130; zuletzt Pettinato 2003:11–125.

Die Auswahl dieser Quellen gründet auf semantischen Kriterien: In beiden Texten spielen Ortswechsel sowie der Gegensatz zwischen den vorkommenden Gebieten eine zentrale Rolle; die Reise wird immer von ausserordentlichen Gestalten unternommen, und die Todesproblematik steht im Zentrum. Diese Auswahl ist nicht als exklusiv zu verstehen, sondern, ganz im Gegenteil, als ein erster Versuch. Es geht nämlich darum, das methodische Instrumentarium an konkreten Fallbeispielen auszuprobieren und kritisch zu reflektieren. Dabei soll die auf die Quellen angewandte systematische Frage als Grundlage für einen religionswissenschaftlichen Textvergleich getestet werden.

3. *Gilgameshs Reise zur Insel von Utnapishtim*²³

3.1. Voraussetzungen und Etappen der Reise

In der auf Akkadisch verfassten Standardversion des *Gilgamesh-Epos* in zwölf Tafeln, die aus dem 13. Jh. v.Chr. stammt, werden die Heldentaten des mythischen Königs der Stadt Uruk erzählt. Gilgamesh unternimmt mit seinem Freund Enkidu waghalsige Abenteuer, die immer mit grossem Erfolg bestanden werden. Die zwei Helden sind stark, schön, unbesiegbar. Gemeinsam haben sie das Ungeheuer Humbaba getötet, sowie den Himmelsstier, den Ishtar ihnen entgegen geschickt hatte. Gilgamesh und Enkidu sind voller Tatendrang und Kraft bis zum Zeitpunkt, an dem Enkidu von einer Krankheit befallen wird und stirbt. Gilgamesh trauert um seinen Freund. Durch den Tod Enkidus wird ihm in aller Deutlichkeit bewusst, dass auch er, obwohl zu zwei Dritteln Gott, sterben wird.²⁴ Gilgamesh kann die Vergänglichkeit menschlichen Lebens nicht ertragen; die Angst vor dem Tod veranlasst ihn zur Suche nach der Unsterblichkeit, eine Reise, die niemand zuvor

²³ Die Übersetzungen aus dem Epos gründen auf der Ausgabe von George 2003.

²⁴ Vgl. *Gilg.* IX, 1–7.

unternommen hat. Ziel ist die Insel von Utnapishtim. Von ihm und seiner Frau, den einzigen unsterblichen Menschen,²⁵ möchte der Held aus Uruk erfahren, wie man dem Tod entkommen kann.

Der Reiseweg führt über verschiedene Etappen: Bedrückt vom Schmerz, der Trauer um Enkidu und der Last der Todesangst, verlässt Gilgamesh die Stadt Uruk, den eigentlichen Ort von Zivilisation und Lebensentfaltung, die Stadt seines Königtums, und begibt sich in die Steppe, in den Bereich der chaotischen, unkontrollierbaren Kräfte.²⁶ Die nächste Etappe ist der Berg Mashu. Fürchterliche, angsterregende Mischwesen bewohnen diesen Ort. Das Skorpionenmenschenpaar, das den Berg bewacht, erkennt, dass Gilgamesh zu zwei Dritteln göttlich ist, und spricht ihn an, um die Gründe seiner Anwesenheit in einer so abgelegenen, unerreichbaren Gegend zu erfahren. Gilgamesh antwortet ihnen:

«[Ich bin auf dem Weg zu] Utnapishtim, meinem Ahnen,
der in der Versammlung der Götter stand [und das Leben fand].
Über Tod und Leben [wird er mich unterrichten]».²⁷
Der Skorpionenmensch tat seinen Mund auf zu reden
und sagt zu Gilgamesh:
«[Nie] gab es, Gilgamesh, [wie du],
niemand [. . .] . . . des Berges.
Für 12 Doppelstunden in ihm [. . .],
die Finsternis ist dicht und [Licht gibt es nicht].»²⁸

Der Skorpionenmensch erlaubt Gilgamesh dennoch, den Berg Mashu zu durchqueren. So läuft Gilgamesh durch den tunnelartigen Weg in vollkommener Finsternis; er geht den gleichen Weg wie die Sonne und taucht schliesslich wieder ins Licht auf. Der Held

²⁵ Zur Vorstellung der Unsterblichkeit in Mesopotamien s. insbesondere Chiodi 1994.

²⁶ Zum Gegensatz zwischen Stadt und Steppe im *Gilgamesh-Epos* vgl. Stolz 2000:44–47.

²⁷ George ergänzt: «of death and life [he will tell me the secret.]»; Hecker 1994:717 hingegen: «über Tod und Leben [will ich ihn fragen]!» (= IX,iii,5).

²⁸ *Gilg.* IX, 75–83.

kommt in einem Edelsteingarten an — eine weitere Etappe. In diesem Garten lebt die Göttin Siduri, die Gilgamesh auf seiner vergeblichen Suche nach Unsterblichkeit²⁹ beisteht. Mit Hilfe des Fährmannes Urshanabi überquert er die Wasser des Todes, und nach dieser letzten Prüfung gelangt er zur ersehnten Insel, der entscheidenden Etappe der Reise. In seiner Rede zu Gilgamesh eröffnet ihm der weise Utnapishtim, dass sein Wunsch, ein Mittel gegen die Sterblichkeit zu finden, Ausdruck von Torheit sei und er sein Ziel verfehlen werde:

[Du] hast (nie) ausgeruht, was hast du (damit) erreicht?
 [Durch] Ruhelosigkeit ermüdest du [dich selbst],
 du füllst deine Glieder mit Kummer,
 du bringst deine fernen Tage (= deinen Tod) näher.
 Der Mensch — sein Nachkommen ist abgeschnitten wie ein Rohr des
 Röhrichts.
 Der schöne Junge, das schöne Mädchen —
 der Tod bringt sie (alle) [sehr schnell] weg.
 Niemand sieht den Tod,
 niemand sieht das Gesicht [des Todes],
 niemand [hört] die Stimme des Todes;
 der zornige Tod ist der, der die Menschheit abschneidet.³⁰

Utnapishtim und seine Frau entkamen dank der Hilfe des Gottes Ea der Sintflut. Sie wurden zu Unsterblichen gemacht und zur Insel jenseits der Todeswasser versetzt, an die Mündung der Flüsse, einen Ort abseits der Welt. Ihre Situation ist jedoch eine ausserordentliche, die nicht wiederholt werden kann. Deswegen weiss Utnapishtim, dass Gilgamesh seinem menschlichen Schicksal niemals wird entrinnen können. Trotzdem gibt er dem König von Uruk zweimal eine Chance: Die erste ist mit einer Probe, die zweite mit einem

²⁹ In diesem Zusammenhang ist ein altbabylonisches Fragment aufschlussreich. Siduri sagt zu Gilgamesh: «Gilgamesh, wohin läufst du? Das Leben, das du suchst, wirst du nicht finden! Als die Götter die Menschheit erschufen, wiesen sie der Menschheit den Tod zu, nahmen das Leben in ihre eigene Hand» (OBVA + BM,iii,1–5, bei George 2003:278).

³⁰ *Gilg.* X, 297–307.

Geschenk verbunden. Wenn Gilgamesh für sieben Tage und sieben Nächte dem Schlaf widerstehen kann, wird ihm die Unsterblichkeit gewährt. Da Gilgamesh sofort einschläft, muss er endgültig erkennen, dass er wie alle anderen Menschen der Vergänglichkeit ausgeliefert ist. Daraufhin erhält er von Utnapishtim ein Abschiedsgeschenk, die Pflanze «šibu išṣahir amelu», «als Greis wird der Mensch jung»: Wer die Pflanze isst, erlangt zur Jugendlichkeit zurück.³¹ Gilgamesh verpasst beide Gelegenheiten: Trotz seiner erfinderischen Ader und seiner Heldentaten ist er als Mensch zu schwach; er besteht die Probe nicht und verliert das wertvolle Geschenk. Die letzte Etappe führt zur Stadt Uruk zurück. Auf der Rückkehr wird Gilgamesh von Urshanabi begleitet. Sobald der König seine Stadt wieder betritt, zeigt er dem Fährmann das grossartige Mauerwerk, das er gebaut hat. Mit diesem wunderbaren Monument von unerreichbarem Wert verschafft sich Gilgamesh, der sterbliche Held von Uruk, zwar kein unbegrenztes Leben, aber immerhin eine ewige Erinnerung.

3.2. Charakterisierung der Räume

Die Schilderung von Gilgameshs Reise stellt verschiedene, entlegene Bereiche dar, die nicht mehr zur Welt gehören. Der Berg Mashu markiert in der hier zugrunde liegenden Kosmologie eine Übergangsstelle, denn er verbindet Himmel und Unterwelt und ist der Ein- und Ausgangspunkt der Sonne. Siduris Edelsteingarten besteht aus einer phantastischen, unbelebten, starren Natur aus Karneol, Lapislazuli und anderen Edelsteinen. Auch die Todeswasser und die Insel von Utnapishtim und seiner Frau befinden sich jenseits der Weltgrenzen. Alle diese Orte können als jenseitige Gegenwelten bezeichnet werden. Sie sind Bereiche, in denen bestimmte Aspekte des Lebens in extremen Formen zum Ausdruck gebracht werden, auf eine Art, die im Rahmen menschlichen Lebens, in der ver-

³¹ Zur Pflanze der Jugendlichkeit vgl. Pettinato 1994–1995.

trauten, bekannten Welt niemals möglich wären. So herrscht im Berg Mashu, an der äussersten Grenze der Welt, ewige Nacht. Im Edelsteingarten der Göttin Siduri ist die Vegetation zwar wunderschön, aber erstarrt und ungeniessbar, denn sie besteht aus unbelebter Materie; schliesslich ist die Insel jenseits der Todeswasser ein Ort des ewigen Lebens.

Durch Gilgameshs Reise werden diese Gegenwelten in einen geordneten Zusammenhang gebracht. Die Schwierigkeiten an den Übergangsstellen, die als unpassierbar gelten, werden durch das Können und die Kraft des Helden sowie mit Hilfe verschiedener Gestalten bezwungen. Durch die Verbindung der unterschiedlichen Gegenwelten entsteht der Reiseweg, auf dem sich die vergebliche Suche des Gilgamesh nach Unsterblichkeit abspielt. Indem er diese, für alle anderen unerreichbaren Gebiete erkundet, erfährt er vieles über sich selbst und die unausweichliche Grenze menschlichen Lebens.

3.3. Transformation

Die Frage nach dem Tod und dessen möglicher Überwindung wird im narrativen Verlauf des *Gilgamesh-Epos* auf der räumlichen Ebene entfaltet. Der Erkundung von verschiedenen Gegenwelten als unbekannten Gebieten jenseits der Weltgrenzen entspricht eine Transformation der Hauptgestalt und ihrer Auseinandersetzung mit dem unausweichlichen Ende menschlichen Lebens.

In der Stadt Uruk erlebt Gilgamesh den Tod seines Freundes, den er zuerst gar nicht wahrnehmen will. Erst als die Leiche des Freundes zu verwesen beginnt, muss der König den endgültigen Verlust erkennen.³² Der Tod Enkidus verleitet Gilgamesh dazu, über die Vergänglichkeit seines eigenen Lebens nachzudenken. Die Vorstellung, sterblich zu sein, bedrückt ihn: «Werde ich auch sterben? Werde ich nicht wie Enkidu sein? Kummer trat in mein Herz ein, ich fürchtete den Tod und so laufe ich durch die Steppe».³³ Am Berg Mashu

³² Vgl. insbesondere *Gilg.* X, 59f.

³³ *Gilg.* IX, 3–5.

unterhält sich Gilgamesh mit dem Skorpionenmenschenpaar, das den Berg überwacht. Gilgamesh legt die Gründe seiner Reise offen; er sei auf der Suche nach Utnapishtim, um ihn über Tod und Leben zu befragen. Der Skorpionenmensch erwähnt nur die Schwierigkeiten der Bergüberquerung, geht aber nicht auf die Gründe von Gilgameshs Suche ein. Zum ersten Mal gewarnt vor seiner Suche wird der König von der Schenkin Siduri; im Edelsteingarten wird er mit der Vergeblichkeit seiner Reise konfrontiert.³⁴ Schliesslich muss Gilgamesh ausgerechnet auf der Insel der Unsterblichen einsehen, dass der Tod für die Menschen unumgänglich ist. Die nicht bestandene Probe sowie der Verlust des Abschiedsgeschenks bekräftigen im Rahmen der Narration die Ernüchterung von Gilgameshs Verlangen. Die Beschreibung der Stadt bei der Rückkehr in Begleitung des Fährmannes hebt die Transformation hervor, die der Held durchgemacht hat. Im Bewusstsein, dass auch er sterben wird, betont Gilgamesh die Besonderheit der Stadtmauer, die ihn verwirgen wird. Gilgamesh verlässt Uruk bedrückt von der Todesangst und kommt als wissender Sterblicher in die Stadt zurück. Die Stadt, die am Anfang der Reise der Ort der Trennung, des Todes, der Trauer und der Angst ist, wird am Schluss als das monumentale Zentrum dargestellt, wo die Erinnerung an den grossartigen und weisen König Gilgamesh für alle Zeiten aufbewahrt wird.

Gilgameshs Reise durch die verschiedenen Gegenwelten verläuft auf der geographisch-kosmologischen Ebene zirkulär. Ausgangs- und Ankunftspunkt der Reise sind identisch; die Veränderung des Helden hingegen verläuft linear und ist unwiderruflich. Die Reise führt von einer instabilen zu einer stabilen, geordneten Ausgangslage: War am Anfang der Reise Gilgameshs Befreiung aus der Vergänglichkeit denkbar (als Ausnahme oder im Fall, dass er Utnapishtims Probe bestehen würde), ist sie nach dem Abschluss der Reise endgültig als Unmöglichkeit entlarvt. Wie alle Menschen ist auch Gilgamesh — trotz seiner Zweidrittel-Göttlichkeit — sterblich, die

³⁴ Dazu s. oben Anm. 29.

Möglichkeit der Ausnahme gehört in eine ferne Gegenwelt wie die Insel jenseits der Todeswasser.

4. *Ishtars Abstieg in die Unterwelt*

Die zweite ausgewählte Komposition liegt in verschiedenen Fassungen vor: Einerseits eine ältere, längere Version in sumerischer Sprache mit dem Titel Inannas Abstieg in die Unterwelt; andererseits eine komprimierte, in der narrativen Entwicklung abweichende Version auf Akkadisch, *Ishtars Abstieg in die Unterwelt*.³⁵ Letztere wird hier in den Mittelpunkt gestellt.³⁶

4.1. Eine Reise auf einer senkrechten Achse

Die Göttin Ishtar nimmt sich vor, die Unterwelt zu betreten. Bewusst möchte sie Erde und Himmel, ihre Machtbereiche, verlassen, um in eine Gegend einzudringen, zu der sie keinen Zutritt hat. Sie steigt in die Unterwelt hinab und erfährt vor den sieben Toren von Ereshkigals Reich, dass sie nur unter den üblichen Bedingungen zugelassen werden kann. So wird ihr bei jedem Tor ein Stück ihrer wunderbaren Aufmachung weggenommen, bis sie schliesslich nackt

³⁵ Die Tafeln und Fragmente der sumerischen Erzählung stammen aus der ersten Hälfte des 2. Jahrtausends v. Chr. Die Entstehungszeit der Geschichte ist jedoch unbekannt. Die akkadische Fassung ist hauptsächlich in zwei Kopien bezeugt: Die erste stammt aus dem späten 2. Jahrtausend und wurde in Assur gefunden, die zweite gehörte zum Bestand der Bibliothek Assurbanipals in Ninive (7. Jh. v.Chr.). S. Müller 1994:760; Bottéro u. Kramer 1989:276, 318f.

³⁶ Für die Edition des akkadischen Textes s. Borger 1979:95–104; von Soden 1967:192–195. Eine neuere Übersetzung des Textes liegt bei Pettinato 2003: 117–125 vor. Für eine deutsche Übersetzung des sumerischen Textes s. Römer 1993:458–495. Die sumerische und akkadische Fassungen weisen erhebliche Unterschiede auf, so dass es sinnvoll erscheint, die zwei Geschichten prinzipiell als eigenständige Kompositionen zu betrachten. Hier wird der akkadische Text betrachtet; die Untersuchung des sumerischen Textes ist im Rahmen des vorliegenden Aufsatzes nicht möglich. Für einen synoptischen Vergleich der zwei Fassungen s. z.B. Hutter 1985:166ff.

ins Innere der unterirdischen Anlage eintritt. Dort wird sie von Krankheiten befallen und stirbt. Die Göttin wird so zu einer der vielen Toten, die im Land ohne Wiederkehr zu finden sind. Das Verschwinden der Göttin zeitigt unmittelbare Folgen auf der Erde. In der Götterwelt ist man deswegen besorgt und beschliesst, die Göttin aus der Unterwelt herauszuholen. Ea, der Gott der Weisheit, lenkt Ereshkigal mit einem listigen Plan ab und lässt die verschwundene Göttin zurückkehren. Die Befreiung der reisefreudigen Göttin aus der Unterwelt hat jedoch ihren Preis: An ihrer Stelle muss ein Ersatz in die Unterwelt geschickt werden. Dumuzi, ein ehemaliger Liebhaber der Göttin, wird geopfert. Ishtar kann zuletzt zu ihrem spezifischen Zuständigkeitsbereich zurückkehren.

Die Bewegung der Göttin ist stilisiert und folgt der senkrechten Achse des Kosmos: Von oben steigt sie in die Unterwelt hinab, die Rückkehr verläuft in umgekehrter Richtung. Die starke Konzentration auf die vertikale Achse ergibt sich aus dem impliziten Gegensatz zwischen Himmel und Erde einerseits und der Unterwelt andererseits.³⁷

4.2. Charakterisierung der Räume

In *Ishtars Abstieg in die Unterwelt* sind unterschiedliche kosmische Bereiche involviert: die oberen — Himmel und Erde — und die Unterwelt. Die Unterwelt wird zu Beginn der neoassyrischen Fassung der akkadischen Erzählung wie folgt beschrieben:

Nach Kurnugia, dem Land [ohne Wiederkehr],
wandte Ishtar, die Tochter des Sin, ihren Sinn.
Es wandte die Tochter des Sin ihren Sinn
nach dem finsternen Haus, der Wohnstadt von Erkalla,

³⁷ Der Gegensatz zwischen oben und unten wird von anderen Oppositionen verstärkt. Beispielsweise ist die Unterwelt als abgeschlossene unterirdische Palastanlage dargestellt, deren Zugang streng überwacht wird. Dies bildet implizit einen Gegensatz zur Breite und Offenheit von Himmel und Erde. Zu den Vorstellungen der Unterwelt im mesopotamischen Raum s. z.B. Kramer 1960; Hutter 1985; Groneberg 1990; Katz 2003; Chiodi 1994 und 2003.

zum Haus, das, wer es betritt, nicht mehr verlässt,
 auf den Weg, dessen Beschreiten ohne Rückkehr ist,
 zum Haus, worin, wer es betritt, des Lichtes entbehrt,
 wo Staub ihr Hunger, ihre Speise Lehm ist,
 das Licht sie nicht sehen, sie in der Finsternis sitzen.
 Und sie tragen wie ein Vogel ein Flügelkleid.
 Auf Tür und Riegel lagert sich Staub.³⁸

Das kosmologische Gebiet der Toten wird gleichzeitig als unterirdisches, finsternes Land und als Palast beschrieben. Bereits in den oben zitierten Zeilen wird die schlechte «Lebensqualität» hervorgehoben, die in der Totenwelt herrscht. Aus der Unterwelt kann man nicht mehr zurückkehren; dieses Motiv wird mehrmals betont. Erkalla, wörtlich «die grosse Erde, das grosse Land» ist finster und staubig; man findet dort nichts zu essen, nur Lehm und Staub.³⁹ Die Toten sehen wie Vögel⁴⁰ aus. Die negative Konnotation des Totenreiches wird auch von seiner Herrin, Ereshkigal, zum Ausdruck gebracht. Dies ist beispielsweise aus einem Dialog zwischen Ereshkigal und ihrem Pförtner bei Ishtars Ankunft vor den Toren der Unterwelt ersichtlich:

Als Ereshkigal das hörte,
 färbte sich wie der Anschnitt einer Tamariske gelb ihr Gesicht,
 wie der Rand eines Biertröges wurden schwarz ihre Lippen.
 «Was will sie (Ishtar) von mir? Was ist der Zweck ihres Kommens?
 Siehe, mit den Anunnaki trinke ich Wasser,
 statt Brot esse ich Lehm, statt Bier trinke ich trübes Wasser!
 Soll ich um die Männer weinen, die ihre Gemahlinnen hinterliessen?
 Soll ich um die Mädchen weinen, die aus dem Schoss ihrer Gemahle
 gerissen?
 Um den kleinen Säugling soll ich weinen, der vor der Zeit weggeschickt?»⁴¹

³⁸ *Ishtars Abstieg in die Unterwelt* 1–11, in der Übersetzung von Müller 1994:761.

³⁹ Unterschiedliche Motive überlagern sich hier: «Land ohne Wiederkehr» (Z. 1); finsternes Haus, unterirdischer Palast (Z. 4, 7, 9); Haus, das nicht mehr verlassen werden kann (Z. 5), Ort der Entbehrung (Z. 8).

⁴⁰ *Ishtars Abstieg in die Unterwelt* 10. Vgl. auch *Nergal und Ereshkigal* (STT 28 iii 4'). Vgl. CAD 7, 212, e).

⁴¹ *Ishtars Abstieg in die Unterwelt* 28–36 nach Müller 1994:762.

Die Unterwelt ist der Bereich der Toten. Nur seine Göttin und ihre Gehilfen sind als lebendige Wesen dort, aber das Leben, dass sie führen, ist stark eingeschränkt und mit dem eigentlichen Leben überhaupt nicht vergleichbar.

Die oberen Bereiche werden nicht direkt beschrieben, sie sind aber als Herkunftsort der Göttin und Lebensraum anderer Götter, bzw. von Menschen und Tieren vorausgesetzt. Dies tritt deutlich zum Vorschein, sobald die Folgen des Verschwindens Ishtars geschildert werden:

Nachdem Ishtar, meine Herrin, [hinabgestiegen zum Kurnugia],
bespringt nicht mehr der Stier die Kuh, der Esel schwängert die Eselin
nicht mehr,
das Mädchen auf der Strasse schwängert nicht mehr der Mann,
es liegt der Mann [allein],
es liegt das Mädchen allein.⁴²

Die Erde als Lebensbereich funktioniert nicht mehr, elementare Prozesse sind unterbrochen: Die sexuelle Aktivität von Menschen und Tieren kommt zum Erliegen, die Lebensordnung ist gestört. Erst eine Verhandlung in der Götterwelt erlaubt, den Lebenszyklus auf der Erde wieder in Gang zu bringen. Der Himmel als Herkunftsort der Göttin wird in der akkadischen Fassung nicht direkt genannt,⁴³ wohl aber in der sumerischen, wo der Gegensatz zwischen Himmel und Unterwelt stark betont wird.⁴⁴

⁴² *Ishtars Abstieg in die Unterwelt* 76–80 nach Müller 1994:764.

⁴³ Ishtar wird als «Tochter des Sin» vorgestellt (Z. 2f.), was die Verbindung der Göttin zum Mond-Gott und ihre himmlisch-astrale Qualität zum Ausdruck bringt. In der Ikonographie wird Ishtar häufig als Stern dargestellt. Dazu Wilcke 1976–1980:80f.; Black u. Green 1992:108f.

⁴⁴ «Vom grossen Himmel richtete Inanna ihren Sinn zur Unterwelt, vom grossen Himmel richtete die Göttin ihren Sinn zur Unterwelt, vom grossen Himmel richtete Inanna ihren Sinn zur Unterwelt. Meine Herrin gab den Himmel auf, gab die Erde auf, stieg in die Unterwelt hinunter, Inanna gab den Himmel auf, gab die Erde auf, stieg in die Unterwelt hinunter», *Inannas Abstieg in die Unterwelt* 1–5 in der Übersetzung von Römer 1993:460f. Für die geographische Situierung des kur in der sumerischen Mythologie s. Katz 2003:63ff.

Im binären Gegensatz zwischen den oberen Bereichen und der Unterwelt übernimmt der Bereich der Toten die Konnotation der Gegenwelt. Aus nicht erwähnten Gründen⁴⁵ verlässt die Göttin Ishtar die oberen kosmischen Bereiche und geht in das Land ohne Rückkehr; durch ihre Reise gerät das Leben auf der Erde aus dem Gleichgewicht. Anders formuliert: Die Reise der Göttin bewirkt eine prekäre Vermischung von Welt und Gegenwelt, was eine problematische Situation ergibt, die gelöst werden muss.

4.3. Transformationen

Ishtar erlebt in den Etappen ihrer Reise eine radikale Veränderung. Sie verlässt in ihrer kostbaren Bekleidung ihren gewohnten Bereich und steigt in Ereshkigals Palast ab, wo sie, nun nackt, von 60 Krankheiten befallen wird und stirbt.⁴⁶ Der erste Übergang führt somit vom Leben zum Tod.

Die zweite Phase, von der Unterwelt zu den oberen Bereichen, ist fast spiegelbildlich konzipiert. Ishtar wird wieder belebt und kehrt zu ihren Herkunftsort zurück.⁴⁷ Dieser symmetrischen Bewegung entsprechen die Veränderungen auf der Erde. Der Verlauf der natürlichen Vorgänge wird durch das Verschwinden der Göttin gestört und erst durch ihre Rückkehr wieder gewährleistet. Die stilisierte, zirkuläre Struktur der Bewegungen der Göttin «oben–unten–oben» korrespondiert somit mit dem Übergang von «Leben–Tod–Leben».

Dennoch ist auch in dieser Erzählung die zirkuläre von einer linearen Struktur überlagert, denn Ausgangs- und Schlussstadium sind verschieden. Die Befreiung Ishtars aus dem Land, aus dem man in

⁴⁵ Zu den Gründen von Ishtars Reise in die Unterwelt divergieren die zwei akkadischen Versionen. Nach der mittellassyrischen scheint es, dass Ishtar Ereshkigal besuchen möchte (s. Z. 10ff.). In der neoassyrischen hingegen werden keine Gründe genannt.

⁴⁶ Vgl. *Ishtars Abstieg in die Unterwelt* 68–75, 118 nach Müller 1994:763f.

⁴⁷ Die Beschreibung des Eintritts bzw. Austritts durch die sieben Tore des unterirdischen Palastes (Z. 39–62 bzw. 119–125) unterstreicht die Symmetrie zwischen Ab- und Aufstieg.

der Regel nie mehr zurückkommt, erfolgt dank einer Verhandlung unter den Göttern und hat ihren Preis: Dumuzi wird geopfert und als Ersatz in die Unterwelt geschickt.⁴⁸ Der Rückkehr Ishtars aus der Unterwelt entspricht somit eine neue Verteilung der Zuständigkeitsbereiche in der Götterwelt. Darüber hinaus bekräftigt die einmalige, ausserordentliche Aktion der Götter zur Rettung der Göttin die Endgültigkeit des Todes. Alle, sogar eine Göttin wie Ishtar, können den Eintritt in das Totenreich nicht überleben und kommen aus eigener Kraft nicht mehr aus der unterirdischen Stätte heraus.

Die Reise der Göttin Ishtar verbindet zwei gegensätzliche Dimensionen miteinander: Die Welt der Lebenden und jene der Toten, die Götterwelt der oberen kosmologischen Bereiche und jene der Unterweltswesen. Der Kontrast zwischen Welt des Lebens und Gegenwelt des Todes fokussiert hier nicht primär das individuelle Schicksal des Menschen, sondern die deutliche Opposition zwischen zwei kosmischen Dimensionen, die zur Gewährung der Lebensprozesse immer getrennt bleiben müssen.

5. Vergleich

Die ausgewählten Texte, *Ishtars Abstieg in die Unterwelt* und das *Gilgamesh-Epos*, erweisen sich unter vielen Aspekten als äusserst unterschiedlich. Bei einer synchronen Betrachtung fällt auf, dass sie nicht der gleichen literarischen Gattungen zugeordnet werden können,⁴⁹ und dass sie in Umfang und Aufbau verschieden sind. Aus

⁴⁸ *Ishtars Abstieg in die Unterwelt* 126–138. Zu dieser Stelle vgl. Von Soden 1967:192–195. Auch in der sumerischen Erzählung wird Dumuzi zur Rettung Inannas geopfert. Dumuzis Schwester, Geshtinanna, tritt an ihres Bruders Stelle ein; schliesslich geht das Geschwisterpaar abwechselungsweise als Ersatz für Inanna je ein halbes Jahr in die Unterwelt (vgl. Z. 400–410 nach Römer 1993:494f.)

⁴⁹ *Ishtars Abstieg in die Unterwelt* wird zu den akkadischen Mythen gezählt; zu Bedeutung und Grenzen einer solchen Zuordnung vgl. z.B. Heimpel 1993–1997:537–542, 547–549. Im *Gilgamesh-Epos* werden zahlreiche mythische Elemente aufgenommen; als literarische Gesamtkomposition wird es als Epos

einer diachronen Perspektive weisen die zwei akkadischen Texte unterschiedliche Entstehungsgeschichten und Rezeptionsprozesse auf.⁵⁰ Verwandt sind die zwei Texte auf der thematischen Ebene, denn beide gehen auf das Problem des Todes mit einer aussergewöhnlichen Reise in Gegenwelten ein.

Methodisch wurden die Textquellen einem parallelen Vorgehen unterzogen, mit dem Ziel, sie im Hinblick auf ihre religiöse Orientierungsleistung zu untersuchen. Die Fragen nach der Struktur der Reise mit den einzelnen Etappen, nach der Charakterisierung der Räume — mit besonderer Aufmerksamkeit auf die Binarität von Welt-Gegenwelt-Gegensätzen — und nach der Art der Transformationen, die durch die Reise vollzogen werden, standen im Mittelpunkt. Dieses parallele Verfahren im Umgang mit den Textquellen bildet eine Grundlage, welche die vergleichende Betrachtung unterstützt, die nun, am Schluss des vorliegenden Aufsatzes, erfolgen soll.

Drei Aspekte werden hervorgehoben: die semantische Charakterisierung des Todes in Welt und Gegenwelten, die Art der Transformation, die durch die Struktur der Reise bedingt ist, und schliesslich die Wirkung der Reise im Rahmen der Erzählung.

5.1. Tod in Welt und Gegenwelten

Beide Texte thematisieren den Tod als allgemeines, unvermeidliches Phänomen, wobei sie ganz unterschiedliche Akzente setzen.

In den besprochenen Stellen aus dem *Gilgamesh-Epos* wird der Tod primär als individuelles, existentielles Problem des Königs dargestellt. Gilgamesh begegnet dem Tod in seiner Stadt. Der Tod, das Negative und Bedrohliche, kommt in der vertrauten Welt, in jener des Lebens, vor. Der Gegensatz zwischen Leben und Tod gehört zum menschlichen Dasein. In den verschiedenen Gegenwelten spielt der menschliche Tod kaum eine Rolle, die Wesen —

klassifiziert. Vgl. z.B. Reiner 1978:159f.; Foster 1997:458. Röllig 1987–1990:50f. listet beide Werke unter der allgemeinen Rubrik «mythologische Texte» auf.

⁵⁰ Dazu s. oben Anm. 22.

Skorpionenmenschen, die Göttin Siduri, Urshanabi und Utnapishtim — die dort leben, gehören zu anderen Dimensionen und kennen den Tod nur als Eigenschaft der Menschen.

In *Ishtars Abstieg in die Unterwelt* hingegen wird der Tod in seiner kosmischen Bedeutung thematisiert. In den oberen Bereichen des Kosmos, auf der Erde und im Himmel, gibt es Leben, in der Unterwelt hingegen nur Tod. Eine Ausnahme bilden die göttlichen Gestalten wie Ereshkigal und ihre Diener, die jedoch nur eine stark beeinträchtigte Form von Leben kennen. In dieser Erzählung sind die positiven Konnotationen — das Leben — eindeutig mit den oberen Bereichen assoziiert, die negativen — der Tod — mit der abgeschlossenen, unterirdischen Anlage, die nur Entbehrung kennt und aus welcher es keine Rückkehr gibt. Der Kosmos ist durch eine deutliche Trennung zwischen Leben und Tod gekennzeichnet. Dieser klaren Trennung entspricht auch die Aufteilung der Zuständigkeitsbereiche der Götter.

5.2. Reise und Transformationen

Gilgamesh und Ishtars Reisen sind unterschiedlich: Der Held aus Uruk beschreitet einen längeren Weg durch mehrere Gegenwelten; die Göttin hingegen bewegt sich auf einer senkrechten Achse und besucht eine einzige Gegenwelt. Beide Reisewege verlaufen dennoch zirkulär; die Protagonisten beginnen und beenden ihren Weg am gleichen Ort.

Hingegen sind die Transformationen, welche die Reisen einleiten, in beiden Fällen linear, sie führen zu unwiderruflichen Prozessen: Die Ordnung, die am Schluss der Reise etabliert ist, kann nicht mehr verändert werden.

Die Korrelation zwischen den Etappen der Reise und den dadurch hervorgerufenen Transformationen sieht in den jeweiligen Erzählungen unterschiedlich aus. Dies wird am besten aus einer schematischen Darstellung ersichtlich:

Gilgameshs Reise zur Insel von Utnapishtim

	Welt	Gegenwelten	Welt
<i>Etappen der Reise:</i>	Stadt Uruk	→ Steppe → Berg → Edelsteingarten → Insel	Stadt Uruk
<i>Transformation:</i>	Tod als Bedrohung, Trauer, Angst	→ Suche, verpasste Probe, verlorenes Geschenk	→ Tod als Eigenschaft der Menschen, ewige Erinnerung durch die Mauer

Ishtars Abstieg in die Unterwelt

	Welt	Gegenwelt	Welt
<i>Etappen der Reise:</i>	Obere Bereiche (Himmel, Erde)	→ Unterwelt	→ Obere Bereiche (Himmel, Erde)
<i>Transformation:</i>	Leben	→ Tod	→ Leben, veränderte Götterzustän- digkeiten

Die Reise verändert in beiden Fällen primär die Hauptgestalten. Gilgamesh geht als verzweifelter Rebell gegen den Tod in die Steppe und kommt als weiser König zurück, der den Tod als Ende menschlichen Lebens annimmt. Die existentielle Frage nach dem Tod wird am Beispiel des Helden auf der individuellen menschlichen Ebene gelöst.

Ishtar begibt sich als lebendige Göttin in die Unterwelt, stirbt und wird dann wieder belebt. Diese Transformation, die sie durchmacht, widerspiegelt sich symmetrisch im Kosmos. Sobald die Göttin verschwunden ist, werden die Reproduktionszyklen auf der Erde gestoppt, eine prekäre Situation entsteht. Erst durch Ishtars Befreiung wird die Situation auf der Erde wieder stabilisiert. Die Frage nach dem Tod wird dabei ganz auf der kosmologischen Ebene beantwortet.

5.3. Zur Orientierungsleistung

In den ausgewählten literarischen Quellen wird die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Tod auf einer geographisch-kosmologischen Ebene entfaltet; nur auf der abstrakteren Ebene der Reisestruktur und der Transformationsprozesse lässt sich eine Parallelität zwischen den beiden Texten feststellen. Die Reisen verknüpfen die verschiedenen Bereiche nach unterschiedlichen Mustern, die retrospektiv als Entwürfe besonderer «Kartographien» gelesen werden können. Die verschiedenen Gegenwelten werden in eine kohärente Raumkonstruktion zusammengefügt.

Die Orientierung, welche diese Texte zu leisten vermögen, kann — aufgrund der starken Betonung der räumlichen Dimension⁵¹ — fast im wörtlichen Sinne verstanden werden: Durch die Erkundung von Gegenwelten wird die allgemeine, nicht zu verändernde Weltordnung mit ihren Trennungen bekräftigt. Dabei wird der Tod als unvermeidliches Ende des individuellen Lebens aufgezeigt und erläutert. Der Tod ist somit dominierendes Element eines kosmischen Bereichs, zu dem alle, die hingehen — ob heldenhafter König oder gar Göttin —, nicht mehr zurückkehren. Obwohl stets negativ besetzt, werden Tod und Vergänglichkeit menschlichen Lebens als Teil der kosmischen Lebensordnung bekräftigt.

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⁵¹ Zur Relevanz der räumlichen Dimension als orientierungsleistende Ebene vgl. Pezzoli-Olgiati 2003 und Pezzoli-Olgiati u. Stolz 2000.

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ELITES AND RELIGIOUS CHANGE IN ROMAN ATHENS*

ELENA MUÑIZ GRIJALVO

Summary

Epigraphy tells about a deeply conservative Athens in Roman times. However, the civic religious life was not identical to that of earlier periods. This article is based on two main ideas. First, continuity is never mere survival; when surrounded by a new context, it may be interpreted as change. The interaction between the Roman empire and the Athenian elites provided such a new context: both Rome and local elites were interested in fostering continuity of religious forms. Secondly, notwithstanding this, epigraphy does indeed document some changes within the civic religion of Roman Athens. One of the most evident is the increasing oligarchization of religious power. It is my contention that this development had a deep impact on religiosity too.

From Hellenistic times onwards, the ties between the *demos* and civic religion were progressively fading away. By Roman times, the democratic fiction did not need to be maintained anymore, as the changes in the management of civic religion show. The increasing religious power of the elite is one of the factors which contributed to create a new framework of meaning. Among other things, the success of certain gods, such as Asklepios, Isis, or Zeus Hypsistos, may *also* be explained within this new context. Reversely, the growing power of these gods may also account for the option taken by those members of the elite who chose

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the cult of Asklepios or Isis as a stage on which to display their generosity and improve their social prestige. It seems only fair to conclude that changes in civic religion should also be explained by the changing attitudes of the elites.

Religious change in the Roman Empire has fortunately ceased to be a concept monopolized by students of some mystery cults and Christianity. The “increasing complexity”¹ in the religious life of the Empire is currently the subject of very fruitful studies. All of them show that not only so-called “oriental religions” and Christianity, but also *polis* religion,² and its old counterparts in the cities — orphism, pythagoreanism, ancient mysteries, to mention only some of them — interacted to create a new religious context: all of them got involved in the game. Of course, along the way the players themselves did not remain untouched: they influenced, and were influenced by, each other.

So nowadays it is possible to find both illuminating general pictures of religious life in the Mediterranean³ and other studies

¹ J. North, “The Development of Religious Pluralism,” in J. Lieu, J. North, and T. Rajak (eds.), *The Jews among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire*, London and New York 1992, 174–189, at 174.

² Based on definitions already widespread — and criticized — I understand *polis*-religion as the religious complex which integrates individual acts in a wider network of rituals that affects each and every social level (i.e., family, *genos*, phratry, *demos*, tribe, *polis* and Hellas). Definitions: C. Sourvinou-Inwood, “What is *polis* religion?” in O. Murray and S. Price (eds.), *The Greek City from Homer to Alexander*, Oxford 1990, 295–322; L. Bruit Zaidman and P. Schmitt Pantel, *La religion grecque*, Paris 1989. A critical review of Sourvinou-Inwood’s definition is found in W. Burkert, “Greek *Poleis* and Civic Cults: Some Further Thoughts,” in M.H. Hansen and K. Raafaub (eds.), *Studies in the Ancient Greek Polis*, Stuttgart 1995, 201–210.

³ R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians in the Mediterranean World from the 2nd Century AD to the Conversion of Constantine*, New York 1987; R. MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire*, New Haven, Conn. 1981; id., *Christianizing the Roman Empire*, New Haven, Conn. 1984; id., *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries*, New Haven, Conn. 1997; K. Hopkins, *A World Full of Gods: Pagans, Jews and Christians in the Roman Empire*, London 1999.

focused on change within particular traditions—even the most conservative ones, such as Roman religion.⁴ Slowly but firmly, it seems that the famous description of the *polis*-religion as a “living corpse” in Roman times, is fading away.⁵

This is an appropriate starting point for anyone interested in religion in Roman Athens.⁶ For what one finds there, is an apparently static *polis* religion. Admittedly the sources are not as breath-taking as the evidence about the colourful religious life in Asia Minor in the same period, for instance.⁷ For Athens we have to rely almost exclusively on epigraphy, probably not the best place to look for change. Inscriptions show indeed a strongly conservative Athens. The worship of the traditional gods was practised in the very same way as before, the same kind of gifts and prayers were presented to the gods, identical formulas were used to address them. In this period, practically no divine newcomers arrived in Athens to cheer up the religious panorama.⁸ And when they did, as was the case with Roman emperors, they did not alter the proper enactment and the normal functioning of public worship.⁹

⁴ J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion*, Oxford 1979; M. Beard, J. North, and S. Price, *Religions of Rome*, 2 vols., Cambridge 1998.

⁵ “Living corpse”: E.R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, Cambridge 1965, 132. Even so, one still may read that the civic religion was “dead and hollow” by Hellenistic times, to quote just a recent opinion (P. Green, *Alexander to Actium*, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1990, 587).

⁶ The works of R. Parker, *Athenian Religion: A History*, Oxford 1996, and J.D. Mikalson, *Religion in Hellenistic Athens*, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1998, cover the period from the Dark Age in Athens to the sack of Sulla; I am not aware of any attempt at a synthesis for Roman times.

⁷ Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, for example.

⁸ Except for Zeus Hypsistos, see below. The evidence for the cult of Mithras is too meagre to be taken into account: *CIMRM* II.2347 (bust with inscription, Athens); 2348 (small altar with inscription, Athens); 2349 (small precinct which “gives the impression that . . . was a Mithraeum,” Eleusis).

⁹ The ruler cult should nevertheless be understood as a religious novelty. For the ruler cult in Athens, see F. Lozano, *La religión del poder. El culto imperial en Atenas en época de Augusto y los emperadores Julio-Claudios*, Oxford 2002.

Even the ruler cult adopted the aspect of a civic cult. However, this sort of mimesis should not necessarily lead us to conclude that religious life in Roman Athens was identical to that which preceded it. There were changes, to be sure, even though modern research will probably have to limit itself to only part of them, the changing attitudes of the elites and their effect on religious life as a whole. This is precisely the aim of this paper, which is based on two main ideas. First, continuity is never mere survival: when surrounded by a new context, it may be analysed as change. That was the case with the public religion of Roman Athens. The sources reveal that people continued to perform essentially the same rituals as before. But already in Hellenistic times, and above all during the Roman era, these people were “confronted with different frameworks of meaning”¹⁰ which should not be ignored. To mention just one of the factors which contributed to create the new context: the Roman presence in the city. The power of Rome caused a good deal of adaptation in every aspect of life.¹¹ As we shall see, sometimes adaptation, paradoxically, meant stauncher conservatism,¹² which, though providing a strong feeling of continuity, may yet be interpreted as another product of change.

Secondly, even apart from the impact of Roman presence, the religious history of Roman Athens was not characterized by mere continuity. Even the “lifeless” sources of epigraphy betray some changes which should not be overlooked. The ruler cult was one of them, to be sure, but there were others. I will analyse just two of them. Inscriptions reveal an increasing oligarchization¹³ of religious power. Of course this was not new: in one way or another the

¹⁰ L. Albinus, Review of Mikalson, *Religion in Hellenistic Athens*, in *Gnomon* 73 (2001) 315–319, at 319.

¹¹ Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*. I 342.

¹² See below.

¹³ I use the term in its literal sense, with reference to the progressive decrease in the number of the people who managed public religious affairs in Athens.

elites had always managed to control religious affairs, just as they controlled every other aspect of public life. From Hellenistic times onward, however, control became more direct and even broke most of the tacit rules of *polis* religion. One of the aims of this paper is to show how this process became more acute in Roman times.

It may be argued that religious oligarchization did not significantly alter religious life, or that it was merely a political or social phenomenon. My second aim will be to show that it produced a deep religious impact too, which helps to explain different aspects of religion in Roman Athens which at first glance might not seem to be connected to the growing power of the elite. In a recent analysis of *polis* religion, G. Woolf has warned against the dangers of putting the public cults of the polis at the centre of accounts of ancient religion. He has stated that it runs the risk of collusion with just one view of religion, that of those who controlled the polis.¹⁴ Without overlooking his warnings, I will argue that the increasing religious power of the elite may be analysed as one of the factors of a general religious change in Athens from Hellenistic times onwards. It involved changes in the management of public religion which contributed to creating a new framework of meaning, that is, a new way of understanding the gods and, therefore, a new religiosity. The development of certain gods, such as Asklepios or Isis, who were to play an increasingly leading role within their adepts' religious world, may be explained in this context. Reversely, the growing power of these gods may also explain the choice made by those members of the elite who used the cult of Asklepios or Isis as a stage to display their generosity.

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As any history based mainly on epigraphy, the history of Roman Athens is a history of elites. The upper classes are normally interested in

¹⁴ G. Woolf, "Polis-Religion and its Alternatives in the Roman Provinces," in H. Cancik and J. Rüpke (eds.), *Römische Reichsreligion und Provinzialreligion*, Tübingen 1997, 71–84, at 74.

continuity, so it comes as no surprise to find a conservative picture of public religion. But not only the elites were keen on maintaining the status quo: Rome as well was interested in maintaining the agreed set of symbolic structures across the Empire,¹⁵ as a way of keeping the social order and avoiding problems. This general attitude was displayed particularly in Athens, where there were further reasons to maintain things as they had always been. Emperors benefited immensely from their control of Athens, being the symbol she was.¹⁶ The more her prestige was acknowledged, the more powerful Rome appeared in the eyes of the rest of the Empire. No doubt the merits of Athens were many, cultural and artistic above all, but also religious. Ever since the classical period, foreigners had praised the deep and unique *eusebeia* of the capital of Attica.¹⁷ This continued until the end of antiquity. Roman emperors would not have it otherwise.¹⁸

Eusebeia meant, among other things, the keeping of ancestral

¹⁵ Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, I 361.

¹⁶ Athenian achievements were constantly invoked by Athens herself, by other Greeks, and by all the foreigners who had to do with the city. On this huge topic, see N. Loraux, *L'invention d'Athènes*, Paris 1981; F. Gascó, "Modelos del pasado entre los griegos del s. II d.C.: El ejemplo de Atenas," *Polis* 5 (1993) 139–149.

¹⁷ Ps.-Xenophon, *Ath. Pol.* III, 2,8; Thucydides II, 8; Diodorus Siculus IV, 39,1; Pausanias I, 17,1; I, 24,3; Aristides, *Or.* I, 192; 374.

¹⁸ Roman building activity at Athens was significant only under Augustus and, above all, Hadrian. Their building policy had two main focuses: first, and above all for Hadrian, to make themselves present in the city; second, to stress ancient cults (above all, Eleusis and the Greater Panathenaea). See J. Travlos, *Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Athens*, London 1971; S. Walker and A.J.S. Spawforth, "The World of the Panhellenion. I. Athens and Eleusis," *Journal of Roman Studies* 75 (1985) 78–104; *Giornate di studio su "Atene Romana," Cortona 1993* (= *Ostraka* 4:1 [1995]); P. Baldassarri, *Sebastoi Sôteroi: Edilizia monumentale ad Atene durante il Saeculum Augustum*, Rome 1998; J.C. Burden, *Athens Remade in the Age of Augustus: A Study of the Architects and Craftsmen at Work*, Diss. Berkeley 1999; G.C.R. Schmalz, *Athens after Actium: Public Building and Civic Identity under the Early Principate (31 BC–AD 117)* (forthcoming).

customs.¹⁹ Of course, the Romans were not the only ones ready to support this labour of conservation. The Athenian aristocracy and its satellites were very much interested in it too. Roman aims went hand in hand with those of the provincial elites, and consolidated that strong and complex network that succeeded in keeping the Roman Empire alive for so long. It has been argued that religious conservatism was a part of the stock of symbolic capital with which the Athenian elite negotiated its position with Rome.²⁰ The image of an *eusebes* Athens was fostered by creating the impression that nothing had changed.

The illusion was indeed quite easy to maintain. Public expressions of Athenian identity were consciously archaizing as a rule. The most obvious example may be found in the use of coins as instruments of propaganda. Athens enjoyed the rare privilege of being allowed to use exclusively Athenian motifs on the coins. Second and third century AD Athenian coins show, on the obverse, the goddess Athena or the owl, while the reverse was used to emphasize ancient Athenian traditions, significantly deities and heroes as they had been depicted in 5th and 4th centuries BC.²¹ No new gods are found among them.

The survey of the *proedria* of the Dionysos theatre is also quite eloquent about the strong conservatism displayed by Athenian aristocracy in the public sphere. The last reorganization of the *proedria*

¹⁹ It is interesting, though, to note that Athens had earned her fame of being *eusebes*, among other things, from being the first to worship certain gods (Heraclides and the Dioscuri: Diodorus Siculus, IV, 39,1; Aristides, I, 374).

²⁰ S.E. Alcock, "The Problem of Romanization, the Power of Athens," in M.C. Hoff and S.I. Rotroff (eds.), *The Romanization of Athens: Proceedings of an International Conference held at Lincoln, Nebraska (April 1996)*, Oxford 1997, 1–7, at 3. On the general subject of the relationship between Greek elites and Rome, see S. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, Oxford 1996.

²¹ J.H. Kroll, *The Athenian Agora. XXVI: The Greek Coins*, Princeton, NJ 1993, 120–24: among others, Athena Parthenos, the fight between Athena and Poseidon, Triptolemos riding his chariot, Dionysos Eleutheros, Apollo Patroos, Theseus, Zeus, Heracles, Nike.

attested by inscriptions on the seats of the theatre was made in Hadrian's times, and it shows that a good deal of inactive priest-hoods continued to be awarded with that public honour.²² Among the imperial inscriptions, several priesthoods are epigraphically attested solely on that occasion;²³ and, judging from other inscriptions, most of the others were not very popular either.²⁴ The fact that cults as popular as that of Isis in the second century AD never enjoyed a *proedria*, means that the actual importance of cults was not reflected in certain traditional contexts, like the theatre of Dionysos.²⁵

As a rule, the same can be said of the whole epigraphic record. Inscriptions probably do not show the real situation of cults. Rather they show the way in which the Athenian aristocracy wanted to be perceived by their co-citizens and, in Roman times, by Roman power; and normally they produced the intended effect. The following is just an example of this success, based on two well-known inscriptions from the second half of the second century AD.

²² M. Maass, *Die Prohedrie des Dionysostheaters in Athen*, Munich 1972, gives the most accurate dating of all the inscriptions on the seats of the theatre.

²³ Twelve Gods (*IG* II² 5065 — this is the only evidence related to this cult after the 4th century BC —), Pherrephatta (*IG* II² 5074), Apollo Zôsterius (*IG* II² 5081).

²⁴ The inscriptions that can be surely dated to Roman times mention the following priesthoods: Afrodita Pandemos-Nymphe, Demeter Kourotrophos-Peithos, Kourotrophos, Demeter Chloe, Diophante, Ge Themis, Chloe, Themis Athena, Themis, Twelve Gods, Dionysos Eleutheros, Olympic Zeus, Olympic Nike, Caesar Augustus, Hadrian Eleutheros, Asklepios Paeon, Demos-Charites-Roma, Charites-Artemis Epipyrgidias, Zeus Bouleus-Athena Boulea, Zeus in Palladion, Dionysos Melpomene, Artemis Kolainis, Antinous Choreus, Athena, Muses, Asklepios, Hefaestus, Nemesis Urania, Anakes-Epitegios, Apollo Lykios, Pherrephatta, Zeus Teleios, Theseus, Dionysos Auloneus, Apollo Daphnephoros, Apollo Zôsterius.

²⁵ There is no absolute certainty on this point. The seats were 67, and only 54 inscriptions have been deciphered. It might seem surprising that people as important as Dionysos of Marathon, priest of Isis (*IG* II² 4771), or Claudius Phocas of Marathon, *neokoros* of Sarapis (*IG* II² 3681), were willing to perform priestly functions in a cult that had no *proedria* attached to it. But both of them were probably entitled to a *proedria* for their many other public functions.

The first one, *IG* II² 1092, known as “the Eleusinian endowment”, is a fragmentary decree issued around 165 AD by a non-identified counsel.²⁶ It established that a certain endowment should be shared among a list of priests, mainly the higher priesthoods of Eleusis. Significantly, in the inscription the Eleusinian hierarchy was mixed with priests and priestesses of the *asty*. It may be inferred that the priesthoods mentioned along with the most conspicuous Eleusinian religious elite were regarded as the highest Athenian priesthoods. Not surprisingly, these were the priestess of Athena and the priest of Zeus, both of them traditionally the first priesthoods of the city. In their (successful) attempt to keep religious power under control, the Athenian oligarchy sanctioned again and again the *ideal* religious order of Athens. At the same time, they were broadcasting a clear message for whoever wanted to listen to it: Athens was the most *eusebes* city in Greece, the ancient order was still alive, and it would serve whoever wanted to profit from it.

Judging from the second inscription, that is exactly what Rome must have understood. The imperial cult did profit from the association with the highly traditional Athenian gods.²⁷ The second inscription, *IG* II² 1076, is a decree honouring Julia Domna as Athena Polias.²⁸ Whatever the level of popularity the goddess may have enjoyed at that time,²⁹ she and no other was chosen to become the

²⁶ *SEG* XXIV.74; J.H. Oliver, “The Eleusinian Endowment,” *Hesperia* 21 (1952) 381–399.

²⁷ This was partly because they were the gods of the leading families in Athens, and partly because Rome wished to be associated with ancient cults; see Lozano, *La religión del poder*, 24.

²⁸ J.H. Oliver, “Julia Domna as Athena Polias,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Suppl. 1940, 521–530; *SEG* XVIII.30. The decree established unusual honours for the empress: statues both in the Parthenon and by the goddess in the Erechtheion.

²⁹ Oliver, *op. cit.*, suggests that it was not too high, because the decree seems to urge the Athenian officers to take part in the annual honouring of the goddess, which means that they were not forced to do it. Obviously he is not taking into account the Panatheneia. Judging from the inscriptions, he seems to be right: I

divine counterpart of Julia Domna. Athenian propaganda had been successful in keeping alive the illusion of an enduring religious state. It seems fair to wonder, at this point, whether this was just illusion or something else.

The desire to remain loyal to tradition in order to profit from it, shared by the Athenian elites and the Romans alike, created a number of paradoxical situations. Probably the best known is the way in which the imperial cult was linked to the celebration of the Greater Panatheneia.³⁰ The same can be said about the connection established between Zeus Eleutherios, the religious expression of Athenian political community, and the imperial cult.³¹ There is a third, less well-known example, which may be interpreted as a parallel to the first two. The goddess Eukleia had been worshipped from the fourth century BC. As her name expresses, she was the personification of the glory of Athens. Her temple had been built

have only found one inscription — not directly related to the Panatheneia — that mentions Athena Polias after the second century AD: *IG II² 3678* (II–III AD), which mentions a priestess of Athena Polias honoured by the *genos* Praxiergidoi.

³⁰ From the association of Anthony with the festival in the year 39/8 BC, to the renaming of the Panatheneia as *Panatheneia Sebasta* in Claudius' reign. For the way in which imperial presence was strategically stressed all along the Panathenaic Way, see Burden, *Athens Remade*. Emperors favoured the growing importance of the festival. Hadrian granted it the status of *hieron agôn*, together with the Panhellenia, the Hadrianea, and the Olympia. One of the main tasks of the Sacred Gerusia created by Marcus Aurelius was to control the celebration of this festival. J.L. Shear, *Polis and Panathenaia: The History and Development of Athena's Festival*, Diss. Univ. Pennsylvania 2001, 634, sums up the paradox of a traditional festival empty of its traditional meaning, used by Romans to show their power to Athenians, and at the same time used by Athenians to negotiate their position in the Roman Empire: "We do not know exactly how its emphasis on Athenian military achievements and democracy was made to accommodate the new political realities."

³¹ A very useful summary of the question, as well as interesting conclusions, is found in V.J. Rosivach, "The Cult of Zeus Eleutherios at Athens," *La Parola del Passato* 42 (1987) 262–285.

with spoils of the Persian Wars. In Hellenistic times, however, the goddess disappears from the epigraphic record, and nothing more is heard of her until she reappears being worshipped together with Eunomia, the personification of the right order.³² There are only two epigraphic mentions of a priest of the two goddesses. One of them is an anonymous *kosmete* of the ephebes; the other one names Quintus Trebellius Rufus as a priest *dia biou* of Eukleia and Eunomia.³³ It is tempting to interpret the honour conferred on this Roman citizen as a way of expressing that the glory of Athens rested on Roman control. Whether that was the purpose of this honour or not, the fact is that an old cult had been reactivated and that the Athenian past was being used to give the Romans the impression that they had pious Athens under control. Which of course was true.

Therefore, it may be safely stated that religious continuity, whether genuine or not, supported the power of the Athenian elites. But some additional forces contributed actively to placing even more religious power in the hands of the leading families of Athens. The process started in Hellenistic times and had to do mainly with a general oligarchization of public life in Athens.³⁴ In classical times, religious authority was not the preserve of any

³² Parker, *Athenian Religion*, 232, suggests that maybe the two of them were worshipped together already in the Hellenistic period. In fact, one of the seats at the Dionysos theatre that has been dated to the 2nd century BC, belonged to the priest of Eukleia and Eunomia (IG II² 5059).

³³ IG II² 3738 (2nd century AD), 4193 (85/86–94/96 AD).

³⁴ A.H.M. Jones, *The Greek City from Alexander to Justinian*, Oxford 1940, 157–191. The growing oligarchization of political life, together with the loss of freedom of the Greek cities in the Hellenistic and Roman world, were linked to the survival of the civic ideals. The use of terms such as *demokratia*, *eleutheria* and *autonomia* by cities that were neither democratic, nor free, nor autonomous anymore, is one of the most remarkable inconsistencies studied by H.S. Versnel, *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion*, I: *Ter Unus. Isis, Dionysos, Hermes. Three Studies in Henotheism*, 2nd ed., Leiden-Boston-Köln 1998, 57–95.

single social or political class, as Garland has rightly observed.³⁵ The demos had the biggest share of it, for it was the demos alone which had the power to introduce novelties into the state cults, to control the use of wealth invested in them, and to prosecute crimes of a religious nature.³⁶ As the demos started to lose real power, and the Boule and the Areopagus took stronger hold of public life, religious authority ceased to be a really public affair.

One of the best indicators of this is probably the vanishing of public inventories. This very Athenian custom consisted of listing periodically the offerings at the most popular sanctuaries (Parthenon, Erechtheion, the shrine of Artemis Brauronia, Eleusis, and the Asklepieion). After the public officers had laboriously counted and weighed all the offerings which covered the walls of the temples and crowded at their doors, spectacularly long lists were published on stone. Unfortunately for us, these public audits ceased to exist as a rule around the end of the third century BC.³⁷

A number of reasons have been suggested to explain the disap-

³⁵ R.S.J. Garland, "Religious Authority in Archaic and Classical Athens," *Annual of the British School at Athens* 79 (1984) 75–123, at 75. However, for a precise assessment of the religious role of the elites in democratic times, see M.H. Jameson, "Religion in the Athenian Democracy," in I. Morris and K. Raafaub (eds.), *Democracy 2500? Questions and challenges* (Archaeological Institute of America: Colloquia and Conference Papers 2), Dubuque, Iowa 1997, 171–195.

³⁶ Garland, "Religious Authority," 78–80.

³⁷ And left us bereft of one of the richest sources for the study of personal piety; with the exception of the Asklepieion, whose inventories lasted till the end of the second century BC. Inventories have been most fruitfully studied: W.S. Ferguson, *The Treasurers of Athena*, Cambridge, Ma. 1932; T. Linders, *Studies in the Treasure Records of Artemis Brauronia Found in Athens*, Stockholm 1972; id., *The Treasurers of the Other Gods in Athens and their Functions*, Meisenheim am Glan 1975; D. Harris, *The Treasures of the Parthenon and Erechtheion*, Oxford 1995; D.M. Lewis, "The Last Inventories of the Treasurers of Athena," in D. Knoepfler and N. Quellet (eds.), *Comptes et inventaires dans la cité grecque*, Genève 1988, 297–308; S.B. Aleshire, *The Athenian Asklepieion: The People, their Dedications, and the Inventories*, Amsterdam 1989.

pearance of this practice.³⁸ However, it is by no means sure that the inventories ceased to be composed at that time. They might have adopted instead different external forms, which would not allow their survival until the present. This is exactly what would have happened, for example, if the new lists were kept in archives instead of being displayed in public.³⁹ If this hypothesis is accepted, what needs to be explained is the new way of making the inventories. Some further hypotheses have been suggested. Without a democratic government, writes Harris, there was little need to keep the people informed of the public accounts; on the other hand, by this time the treasure of Athena was surely counted among the resources available to the ruler.⁴⁰

There is no way to answer the question of the direct influence played by foreigners — such as Demetrios Poliorketes — in this administrative change. Be that as it may, what matters here is that people lost the opportunity of *inspecting* the inventories. From then on, they did not have access to visual proof of the honesty of the priests in charge of the treasures.⁴¹ And that made things different.

³⁸ Ferguson, *Treasurers*, 126, 140: the radical expropriation by Lachares left the Akropolis without treasures to be recorded. Harris, *Treasures*, 39, argues in a different way when she asks: “When exactly did the religious fervour which created so strong a treasury die?” She herself answers that as long as there were inventories, the worship of Athena was strong, constant and genuine, implying that from then on the cult ceased to be genuine. I do not think that this has to be the case: offerings might be scarce, but not necessarily empty of sense.

³⁹ This is Linders’s suggestion, taking into account the increasing importance of archives (*Treasurers*, 61). I have found a very fragmentary inscription of the Asklepieion that could only be an inventory (*IG* II² 4511, first half of the second century AD; see *SEG* XXXIII.196), although there is no way to say who commissioned it, or what was its original size. As far as I am aware, this inscription has not been mentioned in the previous discussion about the end of the inventories.

⁴⁰ See Lewis, “The Last Inventories,” 304–5, who suggested that it is highly probable that Demetrios Poliorketes had taken the crowning of himself and his father literally, and saw no reason why he should not take away what was theirs.

⁴¹ Aleshire, *The Athenian Asklepieion*, 103–5.

No doubt it was important to be able to check what had happened with one's offerings, but even more interesting was to know to what extent the religious staff was obeying the laws.⁴² It had to do with the feeling of being part of the community, and whether the priests in their ritual roles were working for the benefit of the group.

In short, religious authority was slowly ceasing to be felt as a community affair. Inscriptions continued to include the usual formulas "the Boule and the Demos decided so and so," but the power of the assembly had long ago been reduced to giving the necessary assent to the enactment of the decrees proposed by the council.⁴³ At the same time, the number of citizens was becoming smaller and smaller. Full political rights were enjoyed only by those who had served as ephebes. In the 4th century BC it was still possible for every Athenian young man to be an ephebe and to gain access to the Boule. Things changed with time, above all with the end of Athenian military campaigns. Not everyone could afford an ephebic education, so fewer and fewer people gained access to the Boule.⁴⁴ For our purposes here, it may be interesting to note that the *ephebeia* was a way — perhaps the most systematic instrument — to become familiar with the religious traditions of the city as a whole. Aristotle explained how the ephebes were compelled to visit

⁴² I am aware that all this reasoning depends heavily on the discussion about the influence of inscriptions in the life of people. Of course the existence of inventories in stone did not mean that people could or did read them, and even less that they gave credit to what was written. But there *was* something written, which no doubt played a role in the religious landscape. For this and other key questions about writing and religiosity, see M. Beard, "Writing in Religion: Ancient Literacy and the function of the written word in Roman Religion," in *Literacy in the Roman World* (= *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, Suppl. 3), Ann Arbor, Mi. 1991, 35–58.

⁴³ Jones, *The Greek City*, 177.

⁴⁴ D.J. Geagan, *The Athenian Constitution after Sulla*, Princeton, NJ 1967, 75–76; C. Lepelley, *Rome et l'intégration de l'Empire*, II: *Approches régionales du Haut-Empire romain*, Paris 1998, 322; J.K. Davies, "Athenian Citizenship: The Descent Group and the Alternatives," *Classical Journal* 73 (1977) 105–121.

every sacred space in the city (shrines, temples, caves or simple altars), and were supposed to know the exact meaning of all of them.⁴⁵ Those who did not become ephebes, therefore, would probably remain ignorant of the meaning of a good deal of religious sites and traditions. Or even worse, a growing number of Athenians would be incapable of imagining and understanding the complex web of divine beings and ritual acts which gave sense to *polis*-religion.

The process of alienation of the public religious spirit reached its climax in Roman times,⁴⁶ as even the financing of the public cults became increasingly a private affair, often in the hands of foreigners. The Macedonians had inaugurated the imperialistic fashion of financing the civic life of Athens.⁴⁷ From then on, it became customary that foreigners contributed to the funding of Athenian cults or enrolled as members of Athenian civic groups, such as the ephebes.⁴⁸

How Athenians felt about all this has not been recorded. What we know is that around 220 BC a new cult was inaugurated to the *Demos* and the *Charites* in the agora, near the stoa of Zeus Eleutherios, where generous foreigners were honoured with statues and crowns.⁴⁹ So, at least a part of the Athenian people found foreign help convenient

⁴⁵ Arist. *Ath.* XLII,2–5. We have the long ephebic inscriptions to prove that.

⁴⁶ It is difficult to say to what extent Rome took the initiative to constitutional change, as neither Sulla's constitution nor Hadrian's have survived, see P. Graindor, *Athènes sous Hadrien*, Cairo 1934; Geagan, *Athenian Constitution*; E. Kapetanopoulos, "The Reform of the Athenian Constitution under Hadrian," *Horos* 10–12 (1992–1998), 215–237.

⁴⁷ The general of the Macedonian party in Mounichia was the first foreigner who partially funded Athenian festivals: Mikalson, *Religion in Hellenistic Athens*, 58.

⁴⁸ With all the symbolic meaning that it conveyed, as the *ephebeia* was the traditional door which gave access to full Athenian citizenship, see above. The sources place this novelty in the 2nd century BC, and it was a well-established custom among Romans already at the end of Hellenistic times, see S. Follet, "Ephèbes étrangers à Athènes: Romains, Milésiens, Chypriotes, etc.," *Centre d'Etudes Chypriotes* 9 (1988) 19–32.

⁴⁹ R.E. Wycherley, *The Athenian Agora. III: Literary and Epigraphical Testimony*, Princeton, 1957, 59–61.

enough not to feel humiliated, and even to encourage it with honours. The city was happy to accept the donations of its new rulers, and all sort of private gifts — Athenian or not — which meant the practical erosion of the ideal of publicly financed cults.⁵⁰ Festivals and building were slowly ceasing to be funded by the *demos* for the *demos*, and changed into being funded instead by the government, or by a single wealthy individual, for the *demos*.⁵¹

The presence of Rome intensified this general tendency. The religious activity of Roman emperors in Athens has been the subject of too many studies to be summarized here.⁵² As a rule, their building activity was either archaizing (some of the restorations in the Acropolis by Augustus and Claudius, or the moving of rural temples to the agora), or consciously imperialistic (above all, the Roman agora and the Olympieion, both of them visually very impressive).⁵³ Except for the financial support of some conspicuous Athenian citizens, like Herodes Atticus, economic initiative of significance in religious affairs moved into the hands of foreign benefactors and the Roman imperial house.

Epigraphy reveals yet another change in the management of public religion, which should be interpreted within the context of oligarchization. Around the reign of Augustus, there was a change in the internal regulation of a number of “democratic” priesthoods.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Private funding was not new, of course: states tend by definition to deficit, and Athens was no exception to the rule, even in Classical times. But, as Parker explains, the custom became much more frequent in Hellenistic times (*Athenian Religion*, 289).

⁵¹ Mikalson, *Religion in Hellenistic Athens*, 299.

⁵² D.J. Geagan, “Roman Athens: Some Aspects of Life and Culture. I. 86 BC–AD 267,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* II.7.1, 371–437; Walker and Spawforth, “The World of the Panhellenion” (above, n. 18); K. Clinton, “Eleusis and the Romans: Late Republic to Marcus Aurelius,” in Hoff and Rotroff, *The Romanization of Athens* (above, n. 20), 161–182.

⁵³ See above, n. 18.

⁵⁴ Unfortunately the status of most of the priesthoods in classical times remains

Before that, the selection of priests and the duration of their office depended on the particular kind of priesthood.⁵⁵ Traditionally there were a number of ways in which priests came by their position: some were elected, some were chosen by sortition — usually from a restricted list — some inherited their position, others simply bought it. Priesthoods could be annual — usually the selected ones — or perpetual — those associated to a *genos*. Most ancient priesthoods tended to be lifetime tenures, and continued to be so until the end of paganism.⁵⁶ But other non-oligarchical, “democratic” priesthoods changed from being annual to lifetime positions. The priestess of Artemis Kalliste, for instance, who held her office annually in Hellenistic times, became a lifetime priest during the Empire.⁵⁷

The best-known example of the change in the management of public religion, however, concerns the priesthood of Asklepios.⁵⁸ The cult of Asklepios had been controlled by the Athenian state since 360–340 BC. The first epigraphic sign of public control was

obscure: it is not known whether they were gentile or democratic, even in cases as significant as the priesthood of Dionysos Eleutheros. A catalogue of priesthoods active in classical times is given in Garland, “Religious Authority,” 83–111. On Athenian priests, see J. Martha, *Les sacerdoces athéniens*, Paris 1882; D.D. Feaver, “The Priesthoods of Athens,” *Yale Classical Studies* 15 (1957) 123–158 (to the end of Hellenistic age); G.F. Vellek, *The Priesthoods of Athens (86 BC–267 AD)*, Baltimore 1969.

⁵⁵ I follow S.B. Aleshire, “The Demos and the Priests: The Selection of Sacred Officials at Athens from Cleisthenes to Augustus,” in R. Osborne and S. Hornblower (eds.), *Ritual, Finance, Politics: Athenian Democratic Accounts Presented to D. Lewis*, Oxford 1994, 325–337.

⁵⁶ Although Aleshire, “The Demos,” suggests that the reforms of the year 21 BC changed gentile priesthoods from restricted sortition to direct election, probably by the members of the *genos* who controlled the cult.

⁵⁷ Hellenistic: *IG* II² 788–9; *SEG* XVIII.87; Roman: *Hesperia* 10 (1941) n° 42 (125 AD).

⁵⁸ W.S. Ferguson, *Priests of Asklepios*, 2nd ed., Berkeley 1907; Garland, “Religious Authority,” 89–90; Aleshire, *The Athenian Asklepieion*, 14–16; D.J. Geagan, “The Sarapion Monument and the Quest for Status in Roman Athens,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 85 (1991) 145–165.

the introduction of the demotic in the names of the priests, which means that the office rotated annually among the tribes,⁵⁹ and therefore was a “democratic” priesthood.⁶⁰ Sometime between the years 25 BC and 10 AD, however, the office became lifetime.⁶¹ It is not known whether the selection was still made in a “democratic” way or not. The fact is that this most successful public cult became attached to a number of families, among which the Statii of Cholleidai were specially remarkable.⁶² At the same time, a number of secondary positions were created, like that of *hypo Zakoros*,⁶³ or became more frequent and changed character, like that of *Zakoros*.⁶⁴ As a rule, these positions became increasingly more important as bestowers of prestige, especially the *Zakoros*.

The transformation of the main priesthood of Asklepios into a lifetime tenure was explained by Aleshire as a consequence of the increasing unwillingness or inability of citizens to undertake the burdens of the annual priesthood, and of the increasing popularity of the cult, which created a need for more cult administrative personnel.⁶⁵ The combination of these two reasons, however, does not

⁵⁹ The *terminus post quem* has been set by Feaver to the end of the 4th century (“Priesthoods,” 152), and by Garland to the 3rd century BC (“Religious Authority,” 84).

⁶⁰ As defined by Aleshire, “The Demos”: by sortition, theoretically “among all the Athenians,” most probably among a restricted group of previously selected people (*The Athenian Asklepieion*, 73–75). This practice was a typically Athenian way of managing priesthoods, not to be found in other Asklepios shrines, like Pergamon (*InscrPerg*, II 251).

⁶¹ Early examples of this: *IG* II² 3120, 3176. *IG* II² 3579 (post 128/9 AD), however, contains honours for a priest selected by sortition, which calls for caution.

⁶² S.B. Aleshire, *Asklepios at Athens: Epigraphic and Prosopographic Essays on the Athenian Healing Cults*, Amsterdam 1991, chapter “The Statii of Cholleidai revisited”; Geagan, “Sarapion.”

⁶³ *IG* II² 4073 (before 160 AD).

⁶⁴ Before the 1st cent. BC there is only one mention of a *Zakoros* in the cult of Asklepios; after that, a total of 16 is attested. For the *Zakorois*’ status see Aleshire, *Asklepios in Athens*, “Prosopographic Registers.”

⁶⁵ *The Athenian Asklepieion*, 85.

seem to fit well. The priesthood of Asklepios was attractive enough to find suitable candidates. What is more, I see the origin of the change precisely in the appeal of this priesthood as a kind of “no man’s land,”⁶⁶ where it was possible to display generosity and to acquire the prestige attached to the cult. The relationship between the Statii of Cholledai and the cult might be an example. Their behaviour shows that the Statii might be trying to imitate the Eleusinian priests, who in Roman times, even more than before, were the most traditional and prestigious of Athenian priesthoods.⁶⁷ Associating themselves as a family to the Asklepios cult, and accumulating dignities related to it, they emulated the typically Eleusinian citation of ancestral associations with the cult.⁶⁸ The hierarchy of the cult became increasingly similar to the Eleusinian. At least this is a way of explaining the development of some modest offices, such as the *pyrphoros*, into prestigious positions, similar to that of the most famous *pyrphoros* of Athens, the Eleusinian one.⁶⁹

The priesthood of Asklepios, as almost every Athenian cult, had probably always been monopolized by people with economic means.⁷⁰ What needs to be explained, therefore, is not the aristocratization of the cult, but why it was made clear and visible in Roman times. The reason, in my view, was that the “democratic”

⁶⁶ Because it arrived in Athens in the 5th century BC, the cult of Asklepios was not originally linked to any *genos* in particular, as was the case with ancient gentile cults.

⁶⁷ G.E. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries*, Princeton, NJ 1961, 155 n. 1, explains how the increased importance of the cult is indicated by the increased sanctity of the Hierophant, shown by the strict enforcement of the “hieronymy,” not prevalent in earlier times. For the appropriation of this privilege by Sarapion, *zakoros* of Asklepios, in an attempt to acquire the appearance of membership in the hereditary religious elite, see Aleshire, “The Statii,” 69. For the leading position of the Eleusinian priesthoods see Feaver, “Historical Development.”

⁶⁸ Geagan, “Sarapion,” 159.

⁶⁹ Geagan, “Sarapion,” 158.

⁷⁰ Feaver, “Historical Development,” 151–53.

fiction did not need to be maintained anymore. Priesthood — religion, in fact — had long ago ceased to be a really public affair. Taking advantage of the situation enforced by the Roman conquest, the Athenian elites took a stronger hold than ever of every possible mark of prestige, just as did the Statii.

Follet has defined the transition to lifetime offices in the ephobic circles of the third century AD as a process of “sclerosis” and “pauperization.”⁷¹ “Sclerosis” may indeed apply to the Imperial period as a whole, but “pauperization” — if that was really the case in the evidence she analyses — does not seem an appropriate way to describe the situation of the Early Empire. Follet explains the multiplication of the less important functions as a consequence of pauperization. In my opinion, at least during the Early Empire, it was instead a result of the willingness to gain access to the hierarchy of certain cults, such as those of Asklepios, or Isis and Sarapis.

Although the evidence is not conclusive, it seems that these priesthoods became more and more attractive to people of high birth.⁷² One of the most important Isiac documents found in Athens (*IG* II² 4771, c. 120 AD), shows an accumulation of duties in the hands of a few people. Again, this has been interpreted by Dunand as a sign of the modesty of the shrine on the south slope of the Acropolis.⁷³ However, it is difficult to reconcile that modesty with

⁷¹ S. Follet, “La société athénienne au III^e siècle de notre ère. Paupérisation et sclérose,” *Πρακτικά του η' Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου Ελληνικής και Λατινικής Επιγραφικής*, Αθήνα, 3–9 Οκτωβρίου 1982, vol. II, Athens 1987, 195–98.

⁷² S. Dow, “The Egyptian Cults in Athens,” *Harvard Theological Review* 30 (1937) 183–232, at 206–7; D. Plácido, “Isis, la oligarquía ateniense y las tradiciones áticas,” *Memorias de Historia Antigua* 5 (1981) 249–252; E.J. Walters, *Attic Grave Reliefs that represent Women in the Dress of Isis* (*Hesperia* Suppl. 22), Princeton, NJ 1988, 61–63.

⁷³ F. Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis dans le bassin oriental de la Méditerranée*, Leiden 1973, II 137. On the naiskos, see S. Walker, “A Sanctuary of Isis in the South Slope of the Athenian Acropolis,” *Annual of the British School at Athens* 74 (1979) 243–257.

the identity of the priest of the moment, Dionysos of Marathon. The *naiskos* might not have been a very impressive one, but the people related to it were high-class citizens. On the other hand, the accumulation of duties in the hands of these few wealthy people shows that the functions were probably not actually performed by them. The woman who paid for the reconstruction of the *naiskos* was not only *lychnaptria*, but also *oneirokrita*, which means that the offices were not held by specialists.

No pauperization, then, may be attested in the priesthood of either Asklepios or Isis during the Early Empire. On the contrary, the proliferation of offices held by the children of the aristocracy might mean just the opposite:⁷⁴ that priesthoods had become “a venue for acquiring social prestige.”⁷⁵

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So far we have explored continuities (mainly) and changes (few) in the management of Athenian cults. Changes may be understood within the process of oligarchization, which best describes the development of public life in Hellenistic and Roman Athens. As we have seen, oligarchization contributed to the growing distance between public religious life and the people of Athens. This does not mean that people did not continue to take an active part in public rituals, or that they necessarily perceived the situation as a changing one. However, the external changes described above had been shaking the roots of *polis* religion for too long. As a consequence, cleavages may be found not only in the management of public rituals, but also in the old polytheistic equilibrium.

⁷⁴ A fine example are the *arrhephorae* of Demeter-Kore, Chloe, Themis, and Eileithyia in Agrai, who are attested for the first time in Roman times, see G. Donnay, “L’Arrhéphorie: initiation ou rite civique? Un cas d’école,” *Kernos* 10 (1997) 177–205, at 197–98. On the presence of children in the cults of Asklepios, see Aleshire, *The Athenian Asklepieion*, 89–91.

⁷⁵ Mikalson, *Religion in Hellenistic Athens*, 293.

Athenian documents — mostly epigraphic — do not allow us to give a comprehensive sketch of changes in religiosity. However, they point to the increasing popularity of some gods, namely Asklepios, Isis and Sarapis, and Zeus Hypsistos, a newcomer who may be traced to the first century AD. The situation in Athens was similar to what was happening all over the Mediterranean. Whether Isis, Mithras or Hypsistos, these and a few other gods managed to attract the attention of a growing number of people, without preventing them from believing in the existence of other gods, or from paying cultic attention to their divine colleagues. This new kind of devotion has been rightly called “henotheistic.”⁷⁶

The growing success of these gods was but one of the results of a general shift in religious attitudes in the Hellenistic and Roman Mediterranean which constitutes without doubt one of the seminal shifts in the history of mankind. Consequently, the concept of henotheism has been approached from innumerable points of view, which range from explanations of the success of these gods in terms of the broadening of what they could “offer” — soteriological promises, above all⁷⁷ — to reflections upon the changes in the political context of the Mediterranean and their amazing parallels in the changes of the religious outlook.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ For the concept of henotheism and a history of this term, see Versnel, *Ter Unus*, pp. 35–38.

⁷⁷ Soteriology is often linked to the so-called “oriental” gods. On this topic, see specially U. Bianchi (ed.), *La Soteriologia dei Culti Orientali nell'Impero Romano*, Leiden 1982; W. Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, Cambridge, Mass. 1987; J. Alvar, *Los misterios: Religiones “orientales” en el Imperio Romano*, Barcelona 2001.

⁷⁸ The “marked parallelism between the construction of human society and the imagery of the divine world” has been studied by H.S. Versnel in a number of brilliant studies about the relationship of politics and religion: “Religion and Democracy,” in W. Eder (ed.), *Die athenische Demokratie im 4. Jahrhundert v. Chr.*, Stuttgart 1995, 367–387; “Religious Projection: A Hellenistic Instance,” in L. Martin (ed.), *Religious Transformations and Socio-Political Change*, Berlin-New York 1993, 25–39.

Hellenistic and Roman Athens provides us with evidence of two further aspects which should be considered when dealing with henotheism and religious change. On the one hand, the sense of belonging to a political or a religious community was withering away, as has been described above. The process affected not only the highest political levels, such as the assembly or the Boule, but also smaller groups like the phratry and the *deme*.⁷⁹ Traditionally, those groups and their religious activities provided the individual with a sense of equilibrium, best explained by M. Jameson: "Between the great public festival on or below the Acropolis and the small sacrifice in a simple enclosure in a corner of the countryside, there was a *continuum*."⁸⁰ When either those rituals or the communal spirit which sustained them disappeared, the status quo was disrupted. Henotheism — "extra" devotion to one god — may be understood as one of the pillars of a new equilibrium.

On the other hand, when dealing with the prominence of some gods, there is a further aspect — the only one epigraphically attested — which should be considered: the economic and social support of the elites. Flowering cults attract people: Isis or Asklepios's success may have come from the top down, and not only the reverse, as is often implied when dealing with the so-called "oriental" cults. But it may also be the other way around: the choice

⁷⁹ J.D. Mikalson, "Religion in the Attic Demes," *American Journal of Philology* 98 (1977) 424–435, and R. Parker, "Festivals of the Attic Demes," in T. Linders and G. Nordquist (eds.), *Gifts to the Gods: Proceedings of the Uppsala Symposium 1985* (Boreas 25), Uppsala 1987, 137–147, are most illuminating about how they worked as cult centres. On the disintegration of the *deme* see S.E. Alcock, "Minding the Gap in Hellenistic and Roman Greece," in S.E. Alcock and R. Osborne (eds.), *Placing the Gods: Sanctuaries and Sacred Space in Ancient Greece*, Oxford 1994, 247–261; Parker, "Festivals," 143–44: Pausanias still attested local cults in Attica, "but that need not mean that a religious life as bustling, varied and organized as that revealed by the calendars still persisted."

⁸⁰ M.H. Jameson, "The Spectacular and the Obscure in Athenian Religion," in S. Goldhill and R. Osborne (eds.), *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy*, Cambridge 1999, 321–340.

of the most popular gods as favourites of some conspicuous member of the elite may not be accidental.

A glimpse of the Athenian evidence confirms this double hypothesis. Right from its arrival in Attica, the cult of Isis enjoyed the favour of some high-class people. *IG* II² 337 (333/2 BC) recorded the permission obtained by a famous politician, Lykurgos Lykophronos Boutades, to build an Egyptian sanctuary in Piraeus. This is the first mention of Egyptian cults in Attica. By the second century BC, the cult had already become public (*IG* II² 4692) and attracted distinguished citizens.⁸¹ The situation was reinforced by the presence of Anthony and Cleopatra, “the New Isis,” in Athens. To their support of the Egyptian cults has been attributed a decree of the Boule, which deals with the punishment to be imposed upon those who violated certain sacral regulations of the Isis cult.⁸² From the first century BC there is clear evidence of an increasing number of wealthy members of the cult, judging from the costly dedications.⁸³ A group of, by now, 107 reliefs showing women in the dress of Isis, has been interpreted as representations of Isiac initiates, belonging mainly to the middle class, and some of them to the highest social levels.⁸⁴ By the second century AD, Isis was worshipped in two different shrines in Athens, on the south and the north slopes of the Acropolis (in the latter case probably together with Sarapis).⁸⁵

⁸¹ Dow, “The Egyptian Cults in Athens” (above, n. 72).

⁸² J.J. Pollit, “The Egyptian Gods in Attica: Some Epigraphical Evidence,” *Hesperia* 34 (1965) 125–130; J.H. Oliver, “Attic Text Reflecting the Influence of Cleopatra,” *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 6 (1965) 291–294.

⁸³ Walters, *Attic Grave Reliefs*, 61–63.

⁸⁴ The sanctuaries date from the end of the first century BC to the second half of the third AD. See Walters, *Attic Grave Reliefs*, and id., “Predominance of Women in the Cult of Isis in Roman Athens: Funerary Monuments from the Agora Excavations and Athens,” in L. Bricault (ed.), *De Memphis à Rome. Actes du Ier Colloque International sur les études isiaques, Poitiers-Futuroscope, 8–10 avril 1999* (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 140), Leiden-Boston-Köln 2000, 63–89.

⁸⁵ Walker, “A Sanctuary of Isis” (above, n. 73).

Admittedly, there are more material remains of the cult of Isis from Roman than from Hellenistic Athens, specially from the second century AD.⁸⁶ But, as far as the evidence goes, nothing indicates that her increasing popularity had to do with a transformation of the cult, or a broadening of her offer to the public. The inscriptions are quite heterogeneous.⁸⁷ They include different types of offerings to Isis and/or other Egyptian gods (*SIRIS* 7, 10–12, 15, 16, 24, 26–28, 30–33, 33b), private or public dedications related to Isiac shrines (8, 9, 13, 17–20, 23, 25, 29), consecrations of girls to Isis (21, 22), and a decree concerning the punishment of *asebeia* (33a). These are basically the same kind of documents as can be found in any other cult from classical times onwards. The cult of Isis offered a number of attractions, such as incubation and initiation in her mysteries,⁸⁸ but this was already the case in Hellenistic times.

As for Asklepios, he had been a physical healer and a cosmic saviour from Hellenistic — or even classical — times.⁸⁹ The evidence exhibits two peaks in the history of the Asklepieion of Athens: the fourth century BC, and the second century AD. The first

⁸⁶ The significance of the amazing number of theophoric personal names in Roman Athens was prudently weighed by Dow, “The Egyptian Cults in Athens.” He concluded that the more than 300 names found in Athens, compared to the 153 found in the rest of the Greek world, can only be a sign of the popularity of Isis in Roman Athens. But see also V. Tran Tam Tinh, “Etat des études iconographiques relatives à Isis, Sérapis et Sunnaoi Theoi,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* II.17.3, 1710–1738, at 1711: among the 1324 worshippers of the Egyptian gods in Greece, only 28 had theophoric names.

⁸⁷ The evidence surveyed is included in the *Sylloge Inscriptionum Religionis Isiacae et Sarapiacae* (*SIRIS*). Of the 35 inscriptions found in Attica, only 6 are to be dated before the middle of the 1st century BC.

⁸⁸ On the development of the cult, see Dunand, *Le culte d’Isis* (above, n. 73), 131–140. The evidence of the practice of initiation depends on the interpretation of the reliefs mentioned above, see n. 84.

⁸⁹ Parker, *Athenian Religion*, 183, quotes Aristophanes’ *Plutus*, where Asklepios is named “the great light of mortals.” The epigraphic survey is very useful: *IG* II² 4357 (before mid 4th century BC) is a thanksgiving to Asklepios for rescuing someone from wars and for liberating him.

may be explained by the practice of the inventories, which preserved up to 1347 offerings to the god.⁹⁰ The second peak may be an effect of the chance survival of inscriptions, which has preserved a far bigger number for the second century AD than for any other moment of the history of Roman Athens. It might also have to do with whatever made the number of healing divinities grow around the same years.⁹¹ Or it might have been a consequence of the increasing support of certain families, as suggested above. Anyhow, the cult continued to be developed in the same way.⁹²

Conclusion

The main purpose of this article has been to stress the connections between power (political, social, or religious, the three of them always closely intertwined), and its religious manifestations. Religious change in Roman Athens — and no doubt the increasing popularity of Isis or Asklepios may be interpreted as such — relied heavily on the attitude of the wealthiest people of Athens. And not just in one way. On the one hand, their own religious preferences, which may be explained in the ways we have seen above, dictated religious fashion, as it were. But it was also the other way around. Athenian elites profited from the success of a number of cults, notably Isis and Asklepios. Especially in Roman times, and probably because of their increasing success, these cults came to be regarded as

⁹⁰ S.B. Aleshire, “The Economics of Dedication at the Athenian Asklepieion,” in T. Linders and B. Alroth (eds.), *Economics of Cult in the Ancient Greek World: Proceedings of the Uppsala Symposium 1990* (Boreas 21), Uppsala 1992, 85–99.

⁹¹ Healing divinities, or the healing aspect of divinities, were a remarkable feature of religiosity from Classical times onwards. Around the first century AD, however, their number increased, either as a consequence of this new capacity in some traditional gods (Cybele, for example, as ἰατρεινή, CCCA 275, 276), or because of the arrival of new gods in Attica (Zeus Hypsistos, see below).

⁹² L. Wells, *The Greek Language of Healing from Homer to New Testament Times*, Berlin 1998, 40–62.

sources of prestige by those wealthy citizens who had no access to other, more restrictive, priesthoods.

On the other hand the growing influence of the elite over the public religion contributed to create a new religious setting in which certain traditional gods might be reinterpreted and new gods were considered attractive alternatives.

The arrival of Hypsistos — the third and last significant change attested in Roman Athens — may also be interpreted from this point of view. (Theos/Zeus) Hypsistos was an extraordinary successful new god in Greece and Asia Minor.⁹³ In Athens he is attested for the first time in the first century AD. Between the first and the third centuries AD, some 31 private offerings to the Hypsistos were dedicated in his shrine on the Pnyx. Almost all of them are representations of body parts — eyes, feet, breasts, female genitals. The inscriptions, when there are any, are very simple: the name of the offerer, the god in the dative case, and the kind of offering presented.

Neither the arrival of a new god, nor the healing capacity of the newcomer, were new in Athens. But there is something remarkable in this new cult. Hypsistos started to be worshipped in a highly significant place: the Pnyx, one of the most conspicuous public spaces in Athens, where the *ekklesia* used to meet in the past.⁹⁴

⁹³ S. Mitchell, "The Cult of *Theos Hypsistos* between Pagans, Jews, and Christians," in P. Athanassiadi and M. Frede (eds.), *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, Oxford 1999, 81–148. The epithet *hypsistos* was very frequent in the Greco-Roman world, coming probably from the Near East — either from Judaism, or from other Semitic pagan cults, see M. Simon, "Theos Hypsistos," in *Ex orbe religionum: Studia Geo Widengren . . . oblata* (Suppl. *Numen* 21–22), Leiden 1972, I 372–385. It was applied to a wide variety of gods, with different meanings. In Athens and Cyprus, Zeus Hypsistos came to be successful in a healing role, see A.D. Nock, "The Guild of Zeus Hypsistos," *Harvard Theological Review* 29 (1936) 39–88, at 62–66. That much is attested by inscriptions.

⁹⁴ The date when the *ekklesia* stopped meeting on the Pnyx cannot be fixed with absolute certainty. It is almost sure that it did not meet there in Roman times,

Maybe it is not just a coincidence that Zeus Hypsistos replaced another Zeus on the Pnyx: Zeus Agoraios, the ancient Zeus of the *demos*, whose cult was linked to the meetings of the *ekklesia* and had a deep civic significance.⁹⁵ Ironically, the Pnyx, a highly significant public space in the past, became the home of a totally private cult. A fine example of the changes in Athenian religion.

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or at least not on a regular basis, as its normal seat seems to have been the theatre of Dionysos by that time. See W.A. McDonald, *The Political Meeting Places of the Greeks*, Baltimore 1943; J.M. Camp, "The Form of Pnyx III," in B. Forsén and G. Stanton, *The Pnyx in the History of Athens: Proceedings of an International Colloquium Organized by the Finnish Institute at Athens, 7–9 October, 1994* (Papers and Monographs of the Finish Institute at Athens 2), Helsinki 1996, 41–46. Scholars rely on ancient literature to fix a *terminus ante quem* for the abandonment of the Pnyx as a place of meeting, mainly on Athenaios, V, 212–213 (88 BC), and Pollux, VIII, 132 (2nd century AD).

⁹⁵ R.E. Wycherley, "The Olympieion at Athens," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 5 (1964) 161–179, at 176. When the *ekklesia* ceased to meet on the Pnyx, the magnificent altar was probably transferred to the Agora: H.A. Thompson and R.E. Wycherley, *The Athenian Agora. XIV: The Agora of Athens*, Princeton 1972. Only some fragments of it have survived, and their identification as parts of the altar of Zeus Agoraios is still open to debate. See B. Forsén, "The Sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos and the Assembly Place of the Pnyx," *Hesperia* 62 (1993) 507–521; id., "The Sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos and the Date of Construction of Pnyx III," in Forsén and Stanton, *The Pnyx in the History of Athens*, 47–55, who sums up other theories: an altar of Eirene, or the great altar of Athena.

BOOK REVIEWS

GIULIA SFAMENI GASPARRO (ed.), *Themes and Problems of the History of Religions in Contemporary Europe. Proceedings of the International Seminar Messina, March 30–31 2001 / Temi e problemi della Storia delle Religioni nell'europa contemporanea. Atti del Seminario Internazionale Messina, 30–31 Marzo 2001*. [Hierá. Collana di studi storico-religiosi 6]. Cosenza: Edizioni Lionello Giordano 2002, (292 p.), ISBN 88–86919–15–8. € 15,–.

Since its foundation in 2000, the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR) has arranged a number of annual conferences across Europe, the proceedings of which have not been published. The book under review is based on a meeting of the executive committee of the EASR, and as the editor of the volume frankly admits in her “prefazione,” the scholarly work was merely the supporting program of that meeting (p. 10). This context may serve to explain the wide distribution of the countries “represented” by the respective contributors: Italy (2), Germany (2), France, Switzerland, Spain, Greece, Denmark, the Netherlands, Poland, Finland, and even the United States.

Which “themes and problems” does the volume address? In her first of two essays — the other one dealing with religion and community in the ancient world (also published as an occasional paper by the British Association for the Study of Religions), Giulia Sfameni Gasparro reminds the reader of the work of her “Master,” Ugo Bianchi (to whose memory this book is dedicated). Bianchi was certainly one of the most important historians of religion in the second half of the 20th Century, and it is precisely therefore that a more critical evaluation of his work might have been in order than the paraphrasing account given by Sfameni Gasparro. Giovanni Casadio, also one of Bianchi’s students, provides an extensive critical review of the treatment of ancient Mediterranean religions in Eliade’s *Encyclopedia of Religion* from 1987. With his usual combination of wit and learning Casadio arrives at the (hardly surprising) conclusion that the relevant contributions provide “an almost equal mixture of lights and shades” (102).

Let's see if more light prevails in the upcoming new edition. In a nice academic divertimento Gustavo Benavides criticizes what he perceives as the (fashionable) "tyranny of the gerund" in the study of religion and the current "obsession with the role of the theorist" (64).

Two papers address general issues in the study of religion. Both deal with the problem of cultural encounters. While Halina Grzymala-Moszczyska presents three models of cultural encounter (111–116) — to my eyes, the description of these models is both too brief and abstract — Philippe Borgeaud addresses the tricky issue of comparison (67–77). Contrary to Detienne's approach, Borgeaud suggests to study different forms of cultural encounters, exemplifying his approach by a survey of the evolution of the "Grande Déesse". Charles Guittard reminds us of the impact of the Latin language on the formation of the study of religion (117–132). Hence, a discussion of some key-terms at the same time offers insights into Roman religion and the modern study of religion.

Peter Antes tries to provide us with some weapons in our ideological struggle to give legitimacy to the study of religion in the humanities and arts faculties ("Why should people study history of religions", 41–52). One would like to add that there are certainly more, and possibly even more powerful, weapons apart from the ones mentioned by Antes. While Montserrat Abumalham provides a survey of Spanish research on Islam (31–40), Tim Jensen presents some trends and tendencies in the development of the (non-theological) study of religion in Denmark — a country with a remarkably vibrating scholarly community in this field. To a certain degree, most of the trends described for Denmark by Jensen (183–208) also apply to other countries. These trends include an increasing awareness of theory, a diversification and refinement of research methodology (that some might also describe as a neglect of our historical-philological roots and heritage), a stronger orientation towards contemporary religion and the entering of the intellectual as a player in the public arena.

While Jensen's paper illustrates the implications of changes in the contemporary world for the study of religions, the book also contains some contributions to the religious history of Europe. Three of them are dealing with 'post-modern,' or 'alternative,' forms of religion/religiosity. Based on her longitudinal study of Finish youth, Helena Helve discusses the reflections of New Age in the values and world views of contemporary young people in Finland (133–162). Parts of her conclusions read as

follows: “[. . .] we can say that the spiritual resources typical of contemporary young people contain a religious core consisting of individual human rights, self-fulfillment [sic], and individual expression combined with the recognition of social interdependence, the continuation of networks of kinship and friendship, and an undogmatic, private ‘open world view’ and belief system based mostly on Christian values and traditions. In many respects these are also valid for ‘New Age’ self-spirituality, individualism and experience-orientation” (150). Panayotis Pachis provides a — to my eyes rather confusing — account of two religious tendencies in contemporary Greek society, namely Neo-Paganism and attempts at identifying Hellenism and Orthodoxy (221–244). He tries to relate his findings to debates on ‘syncretism’ and eclecticism. While Pachis gives a survey of some public debates in Greek society, Willem Hofstee provides an example of what can be referred to as an ethnographic case-study in the religious history of Europe based on field-work in a small dissident community in Tuscany in the 1980s (163–181). The paper appropriately discusses some questions of methodology and some key concepts such as charisma (but his analysis of ritual fails to convince me). Hofstee focuses on the period of the peak-activity of the group that gained a certain amount of national and international attention when its members were excommunicated from the Catholic Church in 1983. Hofstee merely mentions that the community “was gone” (180) in “less than ten years.” It is a pity that Hofstee, despite repeated visits to the field, does not describe the processes leading to its decline.

Unlike these case-studies, Hans Kippenberg addresses what he calls “the rules of the game” of “the cohabitation of religious communities in Europe” (209–220). Contrary to received wisdom, Kippenberg wants to convince us that “religious plurality in Europe clearly preceded the age of secularization” (214) and modernity. He draws the genealogy of this “plurality” to the impact of Roman law and he sketches the constitutional framework of religious ‘legitimate’ religion in the Western legal tradition, followed by some remarks intended to suggest that “the monotheistic religions” have elements favoring religious toleration. Here, as in the preceding paragraphs, however, the argument is far too sketchy to be convincing. It is certainly important to integrate legal history into the study of religious history, but that should not lead one to jump to conclusions. I agree that the ‘religious field’ was far from homogeneous in European history —

it was and is many-sided and a disputed terrain — but that should not lead us to (somewhat anachronistically) talk about ‘religious pluralism’ with regard to religious communities.

As the book addresses themes and problems of the history of religions in contemporary Europe there is the risk of a Eurocentric perspective. In his contribution (245–259), Michael Pye discusses this inherent danger by appealing to scholars from all parts of the globe to “develop a greater detachment” (257) from the dominant, continuously replicated (“memetic” [derived from Dawkin’s concept of ‘meme’]) assumptions in their respective cultures for which he provides some striking examples. Pye challenges us “to refine our theoretical perceptions and models over against those deep assumptions” (257), and he briefly discusses some key concepts: secularization (negative), civil religion (positive), and some conceptions referring to non-institutional religion such as New Age religion and spirituality, or *reisei*. Ultimately, Pye places his hopes in an “increasing interculturality in the science of religions” (257–258) — and that has been much of his mission while serving as president of the IAHR.

The good news is that the book under review is very conveniently priced. As in many books of this kind, not all bibliographical references are complete. While it is to be welcomed that many authors make an attempt to address a wider public by using English instead of their mother-tongues, the editor should have also taken care to provide proper language-editing. In some cases, the intellectual clarity of the arguments obviously suffers from the imperfect English of the papers. While the book under review certainly contains some interesting papers, seen as a whole it is probably not a major advance in our understanding of key issues — themes and problems — in the history of religions.

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PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Periodicals

HISTORY OF RELIGIONS, 44 (2004), 1

Fabián Alejandro Campagne, *Witches, Idolators, and Franciscans: An American Translation of European Radical Demonology* (Logroño, 1529 — Hueytlalpan, 1553)

Greg Johnson, *Naturally There: Discourses of Permanence in the Repatriation Context*

Amina Steinfels, *His Master's Voice: The Genre of Malfūzāt in South Asian Sufism*

Book Reviews

Books

(Listing in this section does not preclude subsequent reviewing)

Frenz, Matthias, *Gottes-Mutter-Göttin. Marienverehrung im Spannungsfeld religiöser Traditionen in Südindien*. Series: Beiträge zur Südasiensforschung Südasiens-Institut Universität Heidelberg, 195 — Würzburg, Ergon Verlag, 2004, 222 p., ISBN 3-89913-343-9 (pbk.).

Sutcliffe, Steven (ed.), *Religion: Empirical Studies. A Collection to Mark the Anniversary of the British Association for the Study of Religions* — Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004, 279 p., £50.00, ISBN 0-7546-4158-9 (hb.).

Hunt, Stephen, *The Alpha Enterprise. Evangelism in a Post-Christian Era* — Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004, 270 p., £50.00, ISBN 0-7546-5035-9 (hb.), £16.99, ISBN 0-7546-5036-7 (pbk.).

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Antes, Peter and Armin W. Geertz, Randi R. Warne (eds.), *New Approaches to the Study of Religion. Vol. 2: Textual, Comparative, Sociological, and Cognitive Approaches* — Berlin, New York, Walter de Gruyter, 2004, 497 p., €98.00, ISBN 3-11-018175-4 (cloth).

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- Krueger, Derek, *Writing and Holiness. The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* — Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 298 p., US\$59.95, ISBN 0-8122-3819-2 (cloth).
- Reinders, Eric, *Borrowed Gods and Foreign Bodies. Christian Missionaries Imagine Chinese Religion* — Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 2004, 266 p., \$49.59, ISBN 0-520-24171-1 (cloth).
- Keegan, Timothy (ed.), *Moravians in the Eastern Cape, 1828-1928: Four Accounts of Moravian Mission Work on the Eastern Cape Frontier*. Translated by F.R. Baudert. Van Riebeeck Society for the Publication of South African Historical Documents, Second Series, No. 35 — Cape Town, Paarl, Paarl Print, 2004, 308 p., ZAR285, ISBN 0-958455222-2-9 (cloth).
- Borgeaud, Philippe, *Exercices de mythologie* — Genève, Labor et Fides, 2004, 219 p., €22.00, ISBN 2-833099-1141-5 (pbk.).

SAVAGE CIVIL RELIGION

PAUL CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON

Summary

That the decision to wage war in Iraq in the wake of 9–11 was made to appear inevitable, and that its announcement evoked little dissent or critique within the USA despite the absence of evidence linking the Al Qaeda organization to the state of Iraq, testifies to the strategic success of agents of the state in generating terms of reality, the acceptance frames. This essay is an analysis and critique of how such acceptance frames were achieved, by way of a theoretical tour of a refurbished concept of civil religion. The essay considers the question of how *organic civil religion* was hijacked by *instrumental civil religion*: how the relatively inclusive material practices of altar-building typical of the first civil religious expression were incorporated into the exclusive us/them discourse of instrumental civil religion as momentum for war gathered. Taking a phrase of Pierre Bourdieu as axiomatic (2000:185), the “symbolic hijacking that occurs in the move from praxis to logos,” I argue that organic civil religion, though emotionally powerful, was compact in its signifying range — it remained mute in its capacity for social mobilization toward specific political objectives. Indeed, it was because the improvised practices of mourning and memorializing entailed little specifically political content that it carried the emotional force of a relatively pristine representation of social unity. Instrumental civil religion could not draw on the capital of social unity, but nevertheless mobilized political support for even radical military ends.

Il est impossible de vivre en paix avec des gens qu'on croit damnés.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Truth or fantasy-truth? Did this state-making-thing really exist outside of its representations? What is certain is the accuracy of the idea shooting forth in its second and repeated comings following the originary act of spirit possession by the state arising from the ashes of war. And this war is ceaseless.

Michael Taussig, *The Magic of the State*

Despite the horrific violence perpetrated in the attacks of September 11, 2001, the decision to begin the war against Iraq one and a half years later cannot be seen as an automatic or natural response. That it finally did appear inevitable and that its announcement evoked little dissent or critique within the USA, despite the absence of evidence linking the Al Qaeda organization to the state of Iraq, testifies not to its aptness but to the strategic success of agents of the state in generating terms of reality, or acceptance frames, that made it appear so. Within these acceptance frames, war was not only tolerable but finally even seemed required. What follows is an analysis and critique of how such a consensus was achieved, by way of a theoretical tour of a refurbished concept of civil religion.

It may already be difficult to recall the patriotic unanimity within the USA that was generated out of a shared sentiment of victimization in Fall of 2001. After the torture-photos from Abu Ghraib, and in face of a steadily increasing death toll (1733 US soldiers as of June 28, 2005), for the first time a US majority now views the war in Iraq as separate from the war on terror (USA Today/CNN/Gallup June 24–26, 2005). Yet even in President Bush's most recent speech of June 28, 2005, the war in Iraq was linked to "9–11" no fewer than five times. The rhetorical attempt anecdotally suggests the very mechanism this article seeks to clarify: the attempt to channel or divert the force of the unclouded sanctity of the event of "9–11" and the sacred space of "Ground Zero" toward much hazier political ends. At this point it is worth reassessing how the very same process of symbolic hijacking that today rings of desperation was so utterly effective just as few years past; and as we do so, to reconsider the spontaneous memorials that filled the space where towers of the World Trade Center once stood. What can they teach us as we again open the issue of civil religion?

Introduction

At 8:30 P.M., less than twelve hours after Flight 11 hit the north tower of the World Trade Center, President Bush gave a prime-time

television address from the Oval Office fixing the terms of a plot and structure, and transforming a complex sequence of happenings, and a wide range of possible significations, into a clearly defined “event” that soldered a set of as-yet opaque “happenings” to a structure and narrative of interpretation (Sahlins 1985; Feldman 1991). As an event, those terms were widely reproduced in the press and sedimented within days.¹ “Today our nation saw evil,” the President said on the 11th, later in the speech reciting part of Psalm 23. On the 14th, from the National Cathedral, he upped the ante: “God’s signs are not always our own. We ask Almighty God to watch over our nation. We pray that He will comfort and console those who walk in sorrow.” By the 16th, the discursive shift from mourning to military action was realized, “We will rid the world of the evil-doers. . . . This crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take a while.”

This was the incipient form of one sort of civil religious response, which I will call *instrumental civil religion*: national political events were narrated in religious terms by the most powerful speaker in the world, whose words were designed to accomplish calculated political objectives. It was an expression of power in that it attempted to control, by virtue of the “sheer redundancy of ideological communications” (Wolf in Palmié 2002:144), as well as

¹ The morning headlines on September 12 were astonishingly uniform. “Our Nation Saw Evil” (Austin, Texas: *American-Statesman*, Kalamazoo, Michigan: *Kalamazoo Gazette*), “Freedom Itself was Attacked This Morning” (Allentown, Pennsylvania: *The Morning Call*), “Evil Acts” (Miami, Florida: *Miami Herald*; Loveland, Colorado: *Reporter-Herald*). I offer merely typical examples of what was a universal pattern. There were, to be sure, variations. The *Washington Post* and the *Boston Globe* posted Osama bin Laden’s name on the front page the morning of September 12, while others, like the *New York Times*, were more circumspect. While most papers focused on the tragedy and loss of life, the *Wall Street Journal* also lamented the seemingly inevitable economic recession. *El Universal*, from Mexico City, and *O Dia*, from Rio de Janeiro, both showed photos of recognizable bodies falling or leaping from the Towers, while all North American papers censured such disturbing images.

through the censorship of possible rival communications, such as Osama bin Laden's actual discourse and stated motives (Lincoln 2003:19). Discussion of additional and wider frames of interpretation — the role of oil or the presence in US soldiers in Saudia Arabia, or indeed the competing definitions of "terror" itself (Williams 1976:329; Lincoln 2003:27) — were obfuscated.² This was accomplished with enormous success: a complex set of occurrences ceased to exist, eclipsed by the narrative monolith, "9–11," as an artifact of popular consciousness. It occurred so rapidly and with such force that it was as if by magic — state magic, as it happens (Bourdieu 1996:3, 376; Taussig 1997; Coronil 1997). The magic had the effect of people becoming *possessed* (Taussig 1997: 99–108), possessed by narratives presented flawlessly and with such authority as to bury the inchoate, "senseless" violence with a massive outpouring of nationalist fervor and solidarity. Durkheim's reference to collective effervescence as feeling possessed (1995: 220), or to the flag as totem, never seemed so timely as at that time. The possession was not only by the spirit of the state, however, which the second epigraph struggles to convey, but of the spirit of the state read against religious myth, such that the possessing spirits' powers were doubled.

And yet the speed of semiotic doubling, the making of this "event" by way of narrative transfer and ideological redundancy in mass media, did not wholly contain the response. Another kind of response erupted coevally with the words crafted in the West Wing, which I will call *organic civil religion*.³ This second form had no

² Not to mention (it goes without saying) any notion of more economic or social-structural interpretations of the "everyday violence" (Scheper-Hughes 1992:20), "terror as usual" (Taussig in Scheper-Hughes 1992:220), or "hidden violence" of post-modern empires (Coronil and Skurski 1991:334) inflicted routinely on the poor, in part as a result of US policies past and present.

³ "Organic" draws not only on the legacy of the Gramscian lexicon, but also on Lévi-Strauss' characterization of ritual bricolage as bringing about an organic relation between initially separate groups (Lévi-Strauss 1966:32).

official spokespersons and was not orchestrated from above, but rather had a character of *bricolage*, as New Yorkers and visitors adapted whatever objects were at hand — T-shirts, caps, boots, buttons, balloons and teddy bears — to respond to a crisis of memorialization and mourning at hand. It proffered no specific political objective, and religiously was relatively ecumenical. It entailed the spontaneous practice of erecting memorial altars at various sites around the smoking site of the World Trade Center, where collections of objects were placed, visited, touched, added to and improved upon. I refer to such organic civil religion as “savage” in the title, with a nod to Marett’s (1914) or Lévi-Strauss’ (1966) notion of “meaning” that becomes explicit only secondarily, in so far as it is danced, dressed, eaten or built into existence, but which is nevertheless structured, and for that reason communicates something of its builders’ sentiments and motivations. But “savage” refers not only to the materiality of the altar-building, comprised as it was of modern fetishes — common objects endowed with strange and extraordinary powers, and treated as sacred in the Durkheimian sense — but also to the altars’ semiotic resistance to modern closure and disclosure. The altars were never completed, but remained works-in-progress, nor did they “speak” coherently to declare their significance.⁴ The very point of the spontaneous altars, rather, was to

⁴ Trying to interpret such improvised ritualizations, of course, has the feel of throwing darts in the dark. When one asks those placing objects on what I am calling altars about why they perform the actions, as I have, he quickly learns the question’s futility, receiving answers like, “to show respect,” “to remember,” “to honor,” “to not forget.” But why in this form, with these things? The response to such a question is beyond the pale of what is speakable. But then, what shall we do when faced with the aporia, or inadequacy, of actors’ words — can we say nothing, or only repeat the forced phrases altar-builders uttered under duress? How do we “read” mute, or jumbled, practice? At the least, in hazarding an interpretation, though we may not hit a bulls eye — which in any case would depend on the kind of board hung on the wall — we will probably stick some theoretical nerves. This alone makes it worthwhile.

express something that could not be placed into words; to express, commune and communicate with objects and through practice.

The altar-building process continued to gain force with the pilgrimage of many non-New Yorkers to Ground Zero over the next year, and became a key feature of the site and its sanctity. “Sanctity” is not a term I impose as an analytical term here, but like “sacred,” became a common term of practice in public debates about Ground Zero. Legislation proposed by the city on May 6, 2003, for example, sought to prohibit vendors around Ground Zero, “in recognition of the sanctity of the site,” even as Governor Pataki intoned his concern about the state, and fate, of the “hallowed ground.” On that ground and around it, the very same materials that in another context would have been the mere flotsam and jetsam of tourist traffic trucked upstate for disposal, were here transformed into sacred indices of an organic civil religious moment. By Winter 2002 that spontaneous moment was already passed, as most of the spontaneous memorials were dismantled — though some were affixed in a permanent exhibit within St. Paul’s Chapel adjacent to the site — and the collective enthusiasm they had crystallized was hijacked by instrumental civil religion, the drumbeat of the march toward widespread public support for war in Afghanistan and then Iraq.⁵

This essay (an “attempt,” *essai*) considers the question of how organic civil religion was hijacked by instrumental civil religion: how the relatively inclusive material practices of altar-building typical of the first civil religious expression were swallowed by the exclusive us/them discourse of instrumental civil religion as momentum for war gathered. Taking a phrase of Pierre Bourdieu as

⁵ On March 22, 2003, three days after the bombing had begun, 72% of US citizens supported the war, compared with 26% who opposed it (CNN/Gallup). That support later climaxed at 89%. In the present moment, June 2005, that unanimity has disappeared with 53% of respondents agreeing with the statement that “the USA made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq” (USA Today/CNN/Gallup June 24–26, 2005).

axiomatic (2000:185), the “symbolic hijacking that occurs in the move from praxis to logos,” I argue that organic civil religion, though emotionally powerful, was compact in its signifying range — it remained mute in its capacity for social mobilization toward specific political objectives. Indeed, it was because the improvised practices of mourning and memorializing entailed little specifically political content that it carried the emotional force of a relatively pristine representation of social unity. Instrumental civil religion, by contrast, was strategically designed with precise ends in view. Its strident us/them discourse had dramatic effects in mobilizing popular support for specific actions, namely the invasion/liberation/occupation of Iraq. However, instrumental civil religion carried enormous risks of splintering the very consensus on which collective national action depended. That is why its speakers sought and continue to seek to appropriate the social force of organic civil religion. If this sounds overly abstract, simply consider the site, time and key images used in the Republican Convention to renominate Bush for president in the election of November 2004. It was orchestrated to take place in New York City as near to the anniversary of 9–11, as near to the space of Ground Zero, and with as much of its tragic and heroic imagery as possible. This would magically (by contact) transfer the immediate post-9–11 moment when Bush enjoyed enormous popular approval ratings — topping out at 89% on October 12, 2001 (CNN/Gallup) — to the more contested present. Translated into the analytic terms of my argument, the political strategy was to harness the social force of organic civil religion and attempt to transfer it to the ideologically more specific program of Bush’s campaign.

After attempting to clear a theoretical space for reevaluating civil religion in Part Two, the third and fourth parts of the essay empirically describe organic and instrumental forms of civil religion. My method in those sections is to compare the spontaneous altars erected around the wreckage site with official presidential speeches. The former were observed during four separate visits to the Ground Zero area, in October and November 2001, January 2002, on the

anniversary date of September 11, 2002, and in the days surrounding September 11, 2003; the latter are readily available in the public domain. The Conclusion assesses the relation between them as one of symbolic hijacking toward the destination of the national rationalization (in both commonsensical and Weberian senses of, on one hand, justification, and on the other, systematization and normalization) of state-sanctioned violence.

I begin with the definitional problem of “civil religion” as a whole, before moving to empirical descriptions of the two types of civil religious response to September 11.

A Short Critique of “Civil Religion”

Civil religion — the idea if not always the exact phrase — has always been formulated as an interested intervention in a moment of perceived crisis (Hughey 1983:160–64): the social unrest and declining authority of the *ancien régime* leading up to the French Revolution (Rousseau), the anomie of industrialized urbanization at the turn of the twentieth century (Durkheim), the fascist transformation of Italy (Gramsci), or the Viet Nam War (Bellah).⁶ The aftermath of September 11, 2001, presents another propitious moment for its invocation, having produced the most dramatic display of civil religion in the USA since a half-century ago — the

⁶ Most notoriously, Bellah invokes civil religion at a specific historical point, a “third moment of crisis” (1967:16). The first moment was the question of independence, the second that of the Civil War, the third, the moment of his writing, 1967. The third crisis is “the problem of responsible action in a revolutionary world, a world seeking to attain many of the things, material and spiritual, that we have already attained” (16). Prophetically, Bellah anticipates the need for symbols that will reflect the civil religion of a genuine trans-national sovereignty; of American civil religion becoming merely one part of a new *civil religion of the world* (18). The interjection of civil religion as a crisis response entails a claim to authenticity, though, that is in part derived from empirical cues, and in part constructed by its very invocation. His is not merely a description and interpretation, then, but concomitantly a normative call.

Cold War and McCarthyist moment when “In God We Trust” was inscribed on paper currency, and “Under God” was added to the Pledge of Allegiance.⁷ Yet just when we most need the analytical category of civil religion, it lies spent on the sideline, exhausted both from overuse and the lack of any consistent theoretical regimen. Civil religion needs to tone its legs again before being taken out for any further exercise.

Civil Religion in Rousseau

When “civil religion” appeared in *The Social Contract* (1762), it carried the marks of the simultaneous publication by Rousseau of his idea of “natural religion,” as articulated in the mouth of Vicar Savoyard in Book Four of *Emile*. The place of natural religion in a child’s education, wrote Rousseau, should remain unspecified before age fifteen; a child’s religion ought to be no more, but no less, than “a matter of geography.” It ought to be intuited, experienced in the world, and imaginatively created. Rousseau’s notion of natural religion rejected revelation, and rejected the particularism and provincialism of specific religions. Natural religion should be the “religion of man,” of humanity as a whole.

The problem civil religion addressed was that this idea of “natural religion” creates no political bond. In Chapter Eight of the fourth volume of *The Social Contract*, “civil religion” makes its first and all too brief appearance, introduced by Rousseau as he considered the relation of internal national bonds in relation to

⁷ “In God We Trust” was added to paper currency following a bill passed in 1955, proposed by a Florida Democrat in the House of Representatives, Charles E. Bennett. In 1956, the phrase became the national motto. To quote the *New York Times* obituary of September 9, 2003 (Bennett died on September 6), “Mr. Bennett said America had to distinguish itself from other world superpowers. ‘In these days when imperialistic and materialistic communism seeks to attack and destroy freedom, we should continuously look for ways to strengthen the foundations of our freedom,’ he said of his bill from the House floor in April 1955. ‘At the base of our freedom is our faith in God and the desire of Americans to live by his will and his guidance. As long as this country trusts in God, it will prevail.’”

external neighbors. If natural religion generated no political bond, the religion of established churches like Catholicism was worse; it actively divided citizens from the nation-state. The religion of the citizen (*religion de citoyen*), meanwhile, could generate the requisite loyalty, but had the liability of falseness and empty ceremonialism. The challenge of civil religion, then, was to be both genuine and universal. But the requirements of the nation take clear priority. The public dimension of descriptions of gods and their attendant rituals must generate social and political bonds. The citizen must have a religion that makes him love his duty; the question of precisely which religion, as Eisenhower quipped two centuries later, is immaterial (cited in Bellah 1967).⁸ Societies of antiquity like the Spartans or the Romans, which Rousseau took as models of communitarian-religious spirit, were superior in this sense (Bloom 1987:299). At this point Rousseau's enthusiastic citations of Montesquieu, Hobbes and Machiavelli come as no surprise.

The "positive dogmas" were articulated in simple and concise fashion: the existence of an all-powerful, good and intelligent divinity, the afterlife to come, the belief in justice or the good, the punishment of evil-doers, and the sanctity of the social contract and its laws. The only sin for civil religion was intolerance, wrote Rousseau (*Social Contract*, Book IV, ch. 8). (This seems not quite forthcoming, however, since catalyzing intolerance for political outsiders is part of the desired outcome.)

Now, considering the ink spilled over the notion of civil religion after Robert Bellah's appropriation of Rousseau's phrase in 1967, this is hardly a well-developed theory. But the link between Rousseau and the United States is larger, and more material, than the fact of Bellah's appropriation of him in the sixties. *The Social*

⁸ Here we see most clearly the link between Rousseau, Durkheim (who equates sectarian religion and civil religion in function) and more recent Durkheim-influenced theorists like Victor Turner or Pierre Bourdieu, for whom the function of ritual is (among other things) to make social obligations desirable.

Contract was on the bookshelves of George Washington, Ben Franklin, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and many other foundational figures in the American narrative of the nation-state (Spurlin 1969). It informed, moreover, Tocqueville's record of America's popular democratic spirit, crept into the canon of descriptions Americans⁹ used to understand and talk about themselves in the 19th and 20th centuries, and lingered.

Civil Religion and Bellah

Robert Bellah's 1967 essay brought Rousseau's concept into contemporary currency. He expanded the concept from Rousseau to include not only "dogmas" but also national temporal orders, mythic narratives, and places — Washington's establishment of Thanksgiving Day in 1789 (7), the view of America as the "new Israel" with Washington as its Moses and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address as its "New Testament" (10), and Kennedy as its messianic sacrifice (13). The real force of Bellah's essay, though, derived from its empirical focus on presidential inaugural addresses in the United States. As Bellah reported, all but one presidential address invoked a generic god, Providence, or a higher power, terms to which an overwhelming number of Americans assented and continue to assent. Later in this essay, I follow Bellah's lead by examining presidential addresses between September 11, 2001 and the present to uncover new trends.

The period since Bellah's 1967 intervention, lacking the empirical focus of his initial short study, witnessed a proliferation that exhausted many scholars' patience.¹⁰ One problem was civil religion's close imbrication with the normative functionalism of Durkheim,

⁹ I use "America" advisedly in keeping with presidential discourse, conscious that this appropriation of the name of two continents for a single nation-state is a discursive power-play. Properly, of course, the referent is the United States of America.

¹⁰ Bellah himself declared the topic moribund in 1975's *The Broken Covenant*, and had offered his "swan song" by 1980 in the volume co-authored with Phillip Hammond.

such that it was analytically construed as an ever-present social quality — the human sacralization of the symbols of the community, whatever they might be — rather than a particular *content* of discourse.¹¹ But as José Casanova has indicated, the fallacy of a strict Durkheimian argument for civil religion is that there is no reason for assuming the necessary presence of religion to anchor social solidarity. Subjective individualism, not religion *per se*, provides the collective force of industrialized states (Casanova 1992:37–38, 58–60), which depend at least officially on “minimalist” constructions of religion (Lincoln 2003:58–60). Though it is possible to open the consideration of the discourse of “religion” widely enough to consider many features of modernity, notably the exchange of commodities, as Marx made clear in conceptualizations like commodity fetishism, as “religious” — sancrosanct, unquestionable, circumscribed by taboos, larger than life, the very ground of being, and so forth — Casanova’s point is that since all such ontologies are in the contemporary moment elective rather than ascribed or required, it is that very quality of subjective selectivity that unites modern societies. Unless we want to say that individualism itself can be totemic — but thereby removing all possible circumscriptions of “religion” as a topic of scholarly investigation — we must be prepared to state that some societies are simply not religious. Religiosity, including civil religiosity, depends on a particular kind of legitimation, one invoking transcendent powers and eternal sources of authority (Lincoln 2003:5–7).

Just so with regard to the question of violence. Though some might claim that violence always entails ultimate and therefore religious claims, transcendent authority is not always applied to justify

¹¹ Wuthnow (1994) refers to these competing analytical uses as broad versus narrow constructs of civil religion, which roughly echo differences in the use of “religion” in general. An additional problem in the decades after Bellah’s essay derived from attempts to sieve “authentic” American civil religion from its distortions into “civil idolatry” (e.g., Marty 1987:72), a normative hierarchy that further mired civil religion in a definitional bog.

violence. As Talal Asad (2003:10) notes, men like General Haidar of Syria, Saddam Hussein of Iraq, and Ariel Sharon of Israel have executed widespread violence extraordinarily well without any need of invoking the Qur'an or Torah to legitimate it. As with religion in general, so with civil religion, which is not always or by necessity present. From the perspective of a content-based definition, which I am advocating here, civil religion is not inevitably present but rather occurs when nation-state narratives are fused with religious narratives — often themselves regarded as timelessly authoritative — of transcendent beings like gods, spirits and ancestors.

The interpretation of some scholars, of the State as more or less sacred, elides the question of what that “more or less” depends upon, namely the conditions and discourses of the State's representation. In this essay, then, civil religion refers to a specific kind of human discourse relating state histories to extra-historical forces — gods, spirits of the dead, ancestors, saints, and to a lesser extent larger-than-life figures, documents and institutions, ‘forefathers’ and constitutions, to the degree that they are ascribed transcendent statuses (cf. Lincoln 2003: 5–7).

In regard to its discursive content, civil religion entails neither the absolute fusion of national and religious identities, as in the frequently invoked limit-cases of Shinto or the Roman imperial cult, nor the sort of “public religion” as articulated by Casanova. Public religions are initiated from a sectarian religious group that enters the public sphere to influence the relative arrangement of religious pluralism. By contrast, as Philip Hammond (Hammond and Bellah 1980:121–22) argued, the conditions for civil religion's presence are that 1) religious pluralism prevents any one religion being used by all people as a source of generalized meaning, but 2) a need for religious meanings that invest activity yet exists, so that 3) a substitute meaning system is sought and, if found, exalted by those whose activities it facilitates. Civil religions are empirical religions that are distinct from either traditional religions or the state, possessing their own moral codes, ritual forms, and truth claims (Albanese 1992).

Yet this is not quite sufficient either, however, for it is not the case that civil religion is produced from outside all traditional religions. It rather partakes of extant signs and symbols that are already loaded with tradition, and detaches them from their specifically religious venues for recycling in political symbols, speeches and spectacles (Zubrzycki, forthcoming). The process of recycling traditional religious signs and symbols into civil religious ones is not an egalitarian contest conducted on a level field. In the USA, for instance, there is no possibility that witnesses in court might be asked to swear truthfulness by placing a hand on the Qur'an, or by wrapping themselves in an Iroquois *wampum* belt. The religious field of "neutral" words and symbols is already highly circumscribed by what has become known, following Bourdieu above all, as symbolic violence (Long 1974; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Deloria 1992; Bourdieu 1977, 1996, 2000). As some sectarian religious groups' discourses, symbols, and rituals are roughly approximated in civil settings, thereby naturalizing those religions as marked parts of the civil landscape, other sectarian religions are elided or suppressed. However legitimate transcendent appeals may appear as a given social consensus — naturalized as what goes without saying, or "hegemony" (Williams 1976; Gramsci 1992; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991) — civil religion is a fluid boundary that is, and always has been, contested and debated, though that instability is usually occluded in narratives of American religious history.¹²

Top-down or Bottom-up: Ideological and Organic Forms of Civil Religion

Some scholars have refined the definition by distinguishing "high" from "low" civil religion (e.g., Novak 1974; Hammond 1976). Though taking a cue from this distinction, here I favor the opposition

¹² Consider Philip Hamburger's recent (2002) *Separation of Church and State*, for example. Hamburger argues that the infamous "wall" separating church and

between *organic* and *instrumental* expressions of civil religion.¹³ Organic expressions of civil religion are based on lived practices and are *relatively* spontaneous, whereas instrumental civil religion is composed of speeches and ceremonies calculated for political effect, entailing relatively less improvisation. Antonio Gramsci made a similar distinction between “religion of the people” and “religion of intellectuals.” These do not comprise distinct traditions, but rather distinct applications and practical experiences of even the same religion. The religion of the people is “crassly materialistic” (Gramsci Q1862) and spontaneous in that it is a direct response in religious terms to the needs of everyday experience. What the religion of intellectuals sacrifices in the immediacy and force of such material practice, however, it gains in integrative potential exercised in writing, speeches, and other official forms. Despite any aversions one may have to denominating the Bush speeches in the wake of 9–11 as “the religion of intellectuals,” there can be no doubt that such speeches were calculated to articulate a cogent message in a way that spontaneous material practices, like altar-building, were not.

state is nowhere in the US Constitution, but derives from Thomas Jefferson’s correspondence with Baptists seeking legal aid for a specific, local grievance in relation to a Congregationalist majority. The metaphor of the separating “wall” only became canonical as a result of 19th century efforts by the Protestant majority to restrict Catholic efforts to acquire civil benefits; and even more stridently when the Ku Klux Klan appropriated anti-Catholic rhetoric into its nativist-racialist revival. Hamburger shows the dense, confusing ideological networks in which a cause primarily embraced by the “Left”, a strict separation between church and state, gained force as rhetoric of the extreme Right.

¹³ My use is idiosyncratic: More common is to describe “high” civil religion as “priestly,” devoted to maintaining and reproducing social stability. “Low” civil religion, by contrast, we might expect to be “prophetic,” dissatisfied with mere social reproduction and concerned with change. The problem is that one might argue the opposite, based on an idea of massification and false consciousness: “low” civil religion is likely to simply reproduce ruling ideas assimilated through television. It is likely to uncritically accept political discourse without question, and more likely to submit to military training and propaganda.

Yet organic civil religion, precisely through its crass materialism, holds within it a philosophy (per Gramsci, “spontaneous philosophy”), a “sense of things” in relation to one another, albeit an implicit one of practice (Gramsci Q1375). Lévi-Strauss made an analogous point in his opposition between the bricoleur’s knowledge and that of the engineer (1966:16–36). The bricoleur acts in the world through the science of the concrete, organizing through the exploitation of the “sensible world in sensible terms” (ibid. 16). The bricoleur (in contradistinction to the “engineer”) creates structures of meaning only secondarily through the arrangement of a finite set of objects used to solve a given problem. It is not conscious, meditated action, though something like “reflection” — taken broadly as the capacity to evoke critical revision — may occur out of, through, or following, the action’s performance.

Instrumental civil religion seeks to fill in polysemic space. Deriving in part from the bricolage of organic civil religious practice, it transposes an implicit language of objects, a science of the concrete, to an explicitly mythic discourse, discourse that is not only transcendent but hierarchic in the terms it affixes (Lincoln 1999). In the transition from civil religion as a science of the concrete — the altar-building process surrounding Ground Zero — to civil religion as mythic discourse — the us/them binary division rendered transcendent when molded in biblical tropes — instrumental civil religion becomes a total system able to direct public opinion and mobilize group action in the public sphere. Civil religion as organic practice has no conceptual coherence. Only instrumental civil religion presents such coherence, though it is inevitably, for Gramsci, a distorted one “a purely mechanical contact, an external unity based in particular on the liturgy and on a cult visually imposing to the crowd” (Q1862). What is key here is Gramsci’s observation that official (instrumental) civil religion tries to disguise and repress the fact of religious multiplicity, which would undermine universalizing claims (e.g., good/evil, “You’re either with us or against us,” etc.). It attempts to reconfigure what “goes without saying,”

and in so far as it is successful in this mission, to return from the public discourse of explicit ideology to implicit hegemony (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:19–32).

The question that must be asked is, to whom are the effect of religio-national “unity” and the erasure of political debate useful, and why? Civil religion is always an ideological construct that it is always and necessarily interested or motivated.¹⁴ Any articulation of “collective will” — whether Gramsci’s “national-popular” or Rousseau’s *volonté générale* — is not merely imposed, nor is does it emerge spontaneously. It is, rather, legitimated (naturalized, reified, routinized, primordialized) through the political strategies of forging and delimiting the field of possible identifying distinctions, and by making such meanings stick (Eagleton 1991:126, 195; Asad 2003:3).

My argument, however, is that under rare circumstances like the crisis of 9–11, something like a moment of “collective will” may occur that is *relatively* unstructured, and *relatively* innocent of political strategy. To claim that such moments are wholly non-ideological is obviously an unfounded utopianism. The more modest claim is simply that there are more and less instrumental, more and less organic, kinds of civil religious enactments. The altar-building movement, a *relatively* organic civil religious moment, was rapidly co-opted and assumed civil religion’s second, *more* instrumental form.

¹⁴ To invoke ideology does not of necessity cast a villainous shadow, or imply the fleecing of some by others. It can also be a utopian vision inspiring collective action. It is in this sense that Sidney Meade recalled that “the ideal ‘Republic’ dreamed by the founders never existed in actuality. It was a vision, an artist-people’s creative idea . . .” (Meade in Bellah and Hammond 1980:204). Rousseau’s or Habermas’s conditions for communicative, rather than instrumental or strategic action, ideal conditions that probably cannot be met empirically (Althusser 1972:149–50; Habermas 1984:285–86; Eagleton 1991:130), could also be named “positive ideologies.” As Gramsci stipulated, there are socially progressive as well as retrograde forms of ideology.

Let's now consider empirical examples of two distinct responses to 9–11 using the refurbished construct of civil religion.

Organic Civil Religion at Ground Zero

The entire site where the World Trade Center Towers stood became in a certain sense an “altar,” a collection of material objects in space assembled and treated with specific techniques so as to evoke memory, disclose meaning, and present sites of exchange with deities and with the dead. Within this picture of the overall “hallowed ground” of Ground Zero, however, were developed specific sites as occasions for focused action, exchange, memorialization and reflection.

Along Broadway in front of St. Paul's Chapel, the most public memorial site was shaped in the weeks following the attack. A block-long row of banners (“Jacksonville Loves New York”; “This is God's War Now”) hung on a fence. The banners expressed the solidarity of towns, civic organizations, unions, and countries with New York. The fence was additionally lined with baseball caps and T-shirts from manifold places and organizations, each with a message: “University of Virginia,” “Toledo Lutheran Youth,” “God Bless America,” “Union 825, Albany.” Underneath were glass-cased candles, deflated Mickey Mouse balloons, wilted flowers and ragged teddy bears.

Several blocks away, at the corner of Park Place and Vesey, an altar was built onto the wooden barricade wall that bordered Ground Zero. Above it was erected a wooden cross hung with a wreath. Below the cross was a red, white and blue banner emblazoned with “God Bless America” and silhouettes of the Towers. A large plastic angel had been placed under each tower. Under the angel, the altar's shelf was covered with Jewish “Jahrzeit” candles, and other candles devoted to multiple Catholic saints. A Christian nativity scene and a Hindu image of Ganesha were prominent, as was a Yankee baseball cap.

The firemen's and policemen's memorial was erected in November 2001 on the Hudson River side of Ground Zero, and protected by a canopy erected by the city. Here were gathered collections of photos and lists of the lost firemen and policemen, as well as individual shrines built by families, friends and strangers. Lists of the deceased from different stations were embellished with notes inscribed next to individual names: "devoted brother," "loving husband." By the first anniversary of the event, on September 11, 2002, the memorial had been filled with actual belongings of the dead: compact disks of Irish music and empty bottles of Killian's beer, ash-laden rubber boots, helmets, patches, and in several cases the actual jackets that had been worn by firemen when the towers fell around them. Items salvaged from the wreckage had been incorporated as well, including two chains hung in the form of a cross. Candles were periodically ignited alongside pieces of clothing that carried traces of the last physical contact with the deceased. These rendered the altars places of tactile as well as visual remembering. On September 11, 2002, as policemen and firemen stood in groups recounting where they were in the year prior when the towers fell, several visitors wept as they ran their hands over the jackets, helmets and boots. Others mouthed words as they placed their hands on the garments. Still other visitors wrote notes and added them to the altar.

Under a nearby but separate canopy, many of the deceased flight attendants were materially remembered. Between September and November 2001, hundreds of teddy bears had been formed into a neat pile. Indeed, teddy bears were omnipresent at improvised altars throughout the city. Verbal explanations I received about the bears were predictably vague: "showing affection," "paying respects," "an expression of love." This flight attendants' memorial site was already dismantled by Spring 2002.

Elsewhere in the city, memorials that were both planned and then improvised upon took form as well. In Grand Central Station at 42nd Street, to mention just one, a set of bulletin boards was

erected in October 2001, labeled “The Wailing Wall,” and left to be filled with names, pictures and notes. In Battery Park, an “eternal flame” was dedicated on the one-year anniversary, in September of 2002, and this immediately became a new site of material displays, with the first day after its inauguration bringing candles, a hand-written translation of several paragraphs from the Bhagavad-Gita, balloons, the ubiquitous teddy bears, and photos of deceased victims.

The sites were always unfinished, uncensored, and in porous process. On the one-year anniversary (September 11, 2002), a group of girls from London added a British flag to the fence in front of St. Paul’s and scribbled a note of condolence. A group of young men from the Midwest signed an “I ♥ NY” T-shirt and hung it nearby. A child added a cardboard box with cut-out angelic action-figures glued to the sides. An official delegation from Hawaii distributed thousands of magnificent purple orchid *lais* near the site, and these became part of the unfolding process of altar-building, as they appeared on many of the shrines in the days that followed. The same occurred with the arrival of *origami* birds shipped from well-wishers in Nagasaki, Japan.

By the second anniversary of 9–11, in Fall 2003, all altars were gone, and that particular form of memorializing had given way to others. The displays in front of St. Paul’s had been photographed for display, and some retained for a permanent exhibit, but many of the actual objects were simply removed. The firemen’s altar along the Hudson was likewise dismantled and moved elsewhere in the city; allegedly for permanent storage. At the policemen’s memorial wall nearby, only a single altar was erected for the 2003 anniversary. While scattered notes and bouquets again punctuated the fences surrounding Ground Zero, the period of conjoining such offerings into flashpoints of ritual action had passed. What remained was an endless stream of tourists snapping photographs of themselves waving, posed before the void of the world’s most famous hole in the ground, a semantic gap ready to be resignified by any and all. These included Daniel Libeskind, the architect of the com-

ing “Park of Heroes,” “Wedge of Light” and “Freedom Tower,” who wrote that, “The foundations . . . stand as eloquent as the Constitution itself, asserting the durability of Democracy and the value of individual life” (mounted on the wall of the World Financial Center’s lobby).

Interpretation

What could be read in these altars? As bricolage, a science of the concrete, was there a structure generated out of the objects? Lévi-Strauss argued that the process of bricolage occurs as objects are detached from one context of use and recycled into new chains of signification (1966:150). So, for example, Mickey Mouse balloons were detached from Disney amusement parks or the world of children’s entertainment and reattached at Ground Zero as something else. T-shirts communicating local rivalries and allegiances in towns in Kentucky or Minnesota were detached from that original context of use and submitted to a new one on the altars of 9–11. The objects appear to be interchangeable indices of pop-Americana: Mickey Mouse balloons, plastic spinners, baseball-caps, T-shirts, flags, and teddy bears. Perhaps such objects expressed the persistence of a vulgar American vernacular, an unsightly but muscular material lingua franca. Quite apart from the homage paid to individuals and corporate groups, there was a eulogy to the nation, here presented in its most trashy manifestations, an insistence — whether warranted or not — on its continued urgent vitality.

But was anything being “said” through the objects beyond the obvious one of co-presence: I (or my group) was at Ground Zero, as marked by this object now contacted both by myself and the place, the object now representing our meeting and passing co-presence? At best, any such structure remains opaque, open-ended and highly interpretive. Perhaps we might hazard — testing the dark hermeneutic waters — that the caps, shirts, buttons and signs that formerly were designed to foment local identities, distinctions and rivalries were here submitted to the broader identity of the nation.

At this first level of civil religion — civil religion as organic bricolage — the submission of local distinctions to the national one condensed at Ground Zero took shape as a relatively inclusive ideal. The altars expressed a dramatic national religious pluralism: Candles inscribed in Hebrew, Christian crosses, Hindu deities, Native American “four directions” circles, Latin American spiritualist texts, popular Catholic saints’ icons, and fanatical sports allegiances, all found a place there and were left, untouched by official authorities, as coequal symbols.¹⁵ Noteworthy was the conspicuous absence — at least in my reconnaissance — of any Muslim symbols or citations in Lower Manhattan, suggesting the limits of inclusion in the organic civil religion I am describing.¹⁶ As will be presented in the next section, the physical absence in the spontaneous altars is all the more striking when juxtaposed with the dramatic inclusion of Islam in presidential speeches after 9–11, for strategic reasons, rendering the comparison more complex.

Next, the altars gave structure to the tension between remembering and forgetting, of rendering present in one place so as to have some relief from the constant burden of presence elsewhere.

¹⁵ It is plausible, moreover, that this kind of inclusive civil religion was correlated with inclusive social effects in other domains of civil society, such as “race.” In a survey conducted by the *New York Times* between June 4–9, 2002, for example, 53 per cent of African-Americans reported that relations between races are “generally good,” compared with only 16 per cent of African-Americans offering a similar response in 2000. Whether the organic, bricolage form of civil religion was a cause or consequence of such reports of the submission of identity groups to the city of New York and to the nation is unknowable. Sufficient here is to note their temporal correlation. Robert Putnam (2002), to wit, argued that the attacks bonded Americans in a way unseen since World War II, with greater religious and racial tolerance, greater faith in public institutions, and an overall “public spirit-edness” that contradicted the observations made in his book, *Bowling Alone*.

¹⁶ Consider this example of the limits of American civil religion. During the first week of January, Florida pilot and sky-writer Jerry Stephens “wrote” in giant letters across the sky, “GOD IS GREAT.” On the face of it, this was a distinctly American sort of act and message. Though it is hard to imagine another country

The problem in the case of Ground Zero was particularly acute because of the absence of almost all of the bodies.¹⁷ The long delays and likely impossibility of recovering most bodies in recognizable form presented a serious problem for mourning. The mass media's tact in not revealing specific bodies falling or jumping, a deliberate filtering of *too much* presence, was here inverted for the loved ones of the dead. The need for initial tact was replaced by the need for the tactile, the flesh-and-blood presence of bodies that might allow

where the notion of flying an airplane to advertise for God would seem normal, here it barely draws a second glance. This time, though, the response was more pronounced. The phrasing sounded too "Muslim," and set off a minor panic around Boca Raton that it heralded a possible terrorist attack. Interviewed on National Public Radio, Stephens said that next time he would exercise more caution, and more clearly specify that "JESUS IS GREAT," a message he felt sure could not possibly be mistaken or arouse fear. The anecdote is suggestive for the trends it suggests. Stephens aimed to present a civil religious sort of message, but discovered that some kinds of civil religion are, at present, "too Muslim." American civil religion, that set of religious discourses and symbols that "goes without saying" in our country and appears as utterly natural as "In God We Trust" on a coin, now needs to be more clearly marked and distinguished as *Judeo-Christian*.

¹⁷ The final tally of morbidity at Ground Zero was 2,752. The number of bodies actually issued death certificates as of mid-January 2001 was just 622. 1,962 death certificates had been issued at the request of families, even without the bodies. One solution to this problem of the lack of bodies was to give family members pieces of rubble as ciphers to help focus memory and mourning. On this score, I am not at all sure how to consider the teddy bears, which were perhaps, along with flags, the dominant symbol present. Why should teddy bears play so important a part in altars devoted almost exclusively to the memory of adults? My suspicion is that they had something to do with the problem of the absence of the corporeal dead; that they gave tangible form to the loss which otherwise has no trace. The bears no doubt communicated comfort, tenderness and security, the sort of comfort many of them devoted to their families while they were alive. Perhaps the teddy bears laid at the altars gave comfort to the living, to those left as bereft and uncomprehending by the sudden attack as lost children. If so, it is not that the victims were made symbolic "children" as rendered present at their altars, but rather that those they left behind were now become "children" in their absence.

for emotionally rich leave-taking. The diverse objects assembled on altars compensated for the lack of physical corpses with photos, favorite objects, clothing and other synecdochic pointers — parts of a life gesturing to, and temporarily recalling, its wholeness despite the body's absence. Perhaps most importantly, the altars served to locate loss within greater narratives, religious, cultural and political, in many cases all three at once, as a form of practical history-making.

That the spontaneous altars surrounding the former towers were regarded as sacred again became clear in debates about when and how to remove the accumulated debris. The city acted to remove the altars along Broadway in Fall 2002. Michael Wilson from the *New York Times* described it as follows: "The job is delicate, both physically and symbolically. Two men in windbreakers worked in silence yesterday, peeling worn T-shirts like layers of skin from the iron bars . . . He folds every item carefully and lays it inside a cardboard box, pausing to shake the dust out of a cap or a frayed flag" (11/7/02). They cleared just ten feet of fence per week so as not to shock passersby too abruptly with the absence. Yet the void felt in lower Manhattan by the removal of the assemblage of multivocal symbols was quickly filled by words, the most consequential of which were spoken by the President, and which were far less open either to spontaneous adaptation or to interpretation.¹⁸

¹⁸ To be fair, even this site I have named the epicenter of relatively inclusive organic civil religion was hotly contested and the subject of frequent ideological debate. To wit, on November 2, 2001, the heroes of September, policeman and fire fighters with 366 dead between them, squared off in fisticuffs over Mayor Giuliani's decision to reduce the number of firemen working at the site from 64 to 25. To firemen, the reduction was an attempt to turn the sacred burial site of their brothers into a mere clean-up zone, a "full-time construction scoop and dump operation" (*New York Times* 11/3/01). In early January 2002, conflict again arose, this time over the issue of Ground Zero and tourism. As the city built the first of a projected four viewing ramps from where visitors could survey the site, street vendors set up tables to hawk "F.D.N.Y." T-shirts and "Ground Zero" caps and pins. This evoked protests from relatives of the deceased against the cheap exploitation

Presidential Speeches as Instrumental Civil Religion

In the consideration of official presidential speeches, the questions of actual authorship or personal intent are bracketed. It has been much commented upon that the lead speechwriter, Michael Gerson, is a graduate of an fervently evangelical institution located in the suburbs of Chicago, Wheaton College, and is therefore personally responsible for many of the religious references of speeches — both overtly religious phrases like “placing our confidence in the loving God behind all of life and all of history” (State of the Union Address, 1/28/03) and covertly religious phrases recognizable only to the evangelically attuned, like “there is power, wonder-working power in the goodness and idealism and faith of the American people,” referring to Baptist hymnody familiar to certain churched adepts (*ibid.*). Here the perspective taken is that major official speeches reflect neither the personal views of Bush nor of Gerson, but are rather collective efforts, vetted by multiple members of White House staff and advisory groups at multiple levels of bureaucratic hierarchy (Lincoln 2003:24). They can therefore be critiqued as ideology, as official representations in a way that ad-hoc improvisations, which may or may not reflect a considered political platform, cannot be.

of a sacred site for capital gain, complete with comparisons to Jesus’ overturning of moneychanger’s tables in the temple. The same basic issue of whether, and how, to combine commercial with sacred uses, and the assumption that they are antithetical, orients ongoing heated exchanges. These have been especially between the winning architect, Daniel Libeskind, who defends his design’s appeal to the families’ of the deceased, and Larry Silverstein, the territory’s leaseholder and most promising financier, who defends the need to restore lower Manhattan’s capital viability.

Also notable in this unfolding public debate is the progressive shrinkage of the site consecrated as “hallowed ground,” such that by Summer 2003 some actors’ discourses had restricted that denomination only to the towers’ “footprints,” or actual foundations. Other debates focused on how deep the sacredness of the site

An examination of Bush's speeches does not suggest the absence of regard for the kind of inclusiveness of expressions I have called organic civil religion. To the contrary, beginning with his inaugural address, Bush's speeches were the first in presidential history to include the word "mosques" in stock phrases about places of worship. On the newly proclaimed National Day of Prayer (May 1, 2003),¹⁹ the same day that the "end of combat operations" in Iraq was declared, for example, Bush said, "In this hour of history's calling, Americans are bowing humbly in churches, synagogues, temples, mosques and in their own homes in the presence of the Almighty." The inclusion of "mosques" in such statements presented a novel recognition of American religious pluralism in official presidential discourse.

Moreover, the speeches explicitly recognized, and applauded, the kind of initial impulse represented in the altar-building process. The discursive recognition of unity amidst diversity in practices and beliefs, however, was in most speeches rapidly shifted to statements indicating the collective action that should naturally follow. For example, immediately following the recognition of what I have called organic civil religion in the address of 9/20/01, the President's discourse initiated a strategic shift to a more ideological and instrumental tone: "Tonight we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution." Even within the context of the National Day of Prayer speech in the National Cathedral (9/14/01), where a sustained focus on the organic civil religious phenomenon of grieving might have been expected, a similar dramatic shift obtained. On the

extends: whether to the level of the buildings' foundations, or to the lowest level of human loss of life. The precise dimensions of Ground Zero as sacred space are constantly shifting.

¹⁹ Also May Day, the International Worker's Day. The symbolism of the "Day of Prayer" eclipsing the primary international labor celebration could not be more obvious.

one hand there was an acknowledgment of a collective state of mourning — “God’s signs are not always the ones we look for. We learn in tragedy that his purposes are not always our own” — and on the other hand, the channeling of that diffuse state of collective mourning toward a clear political meaning — “Just three days removed from these events, Americans do not yet have the distance of history. But our responsibility to history is already clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil.”

The fight against evil, cast in apocalyptic terms, became a leit-motiv of official speeches in the ensuing years and continues to the present. Only two weeks after the attack, citizens were informed to “not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen”; the world was likewise warned, “every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists” (9/20/01). The same speech referred to America’s “calling,” in a mission divinely mandated and with ultimate consequences: “Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them” (9/20/01). The showdown between good and the “axis of evil” was invoked in the State of the Union Address several months later (1/29/02).

To support the invocation of evil in an absolute, ontological sense, that to which the USA must reply, Bush’s speeches likened Al Qaeda repeatedly to the standard-bearer for unequivocal evil, Nazism (11/9/01, 9/11/02, 1/20/03, 5/1/03). Since the USA played a key role in the defeat of evil on that occasion, Bush’s words exhorted, it had to again take up arms, now again “to save civilization itself” (11/8/01).

If America was “called by history” (1/28/03), that history was one of divine intervention (“an angel still rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm,” 1/20/01) for which the USA was the earthly representative: “The liberty we prize is not America’s gift to the world; it is God’s gift to humanity” (1/28/03); *ergo*, America is the giver of God’s gift of liberty to the world. This was a large task,

to be sure, but one Americans had to be willing to shoulder: "Once again, we are called to defend the safety of our people and the hopes of all mankind" (1/28/03). In the address that prematurely declared the alleged end of combat in Iraq, Bush added, "All of you, all in this generation of our military, have taken up the highest calling of history" (5/1/03). The calling was repeatedly affirmed as divinely mandated.

The "calling" to save the world was cast in increasingly biblical, and increasingly bilious language in the period approaching Operation Iraqi Freedom (March 19–May 1, 2003). On September 11, 2002, the anniversary of the attacks and the eve of Bush's pitch to the United Nations for action against Iraq, the president's discourse presented a shift from the recognition of an organic civil religiosity to an ideological claim upon it. In words uttered from a carefully positioned stage just below the Statue of Liberty, the speech moved from statements like, "Yet we do know that God has placed us together in this moment," to a clarion call, "This ideal of America is the hope of all mankind . . . and the light shines in the darkness. And the darkness will not overcome it. May God bless America." In the speech marking the (intended) conclusion of combat operations in Iraq of May 1, 2003, Bush's remarks, spoken on the deck of an aircraft carrier whose tower advertised "Mission Accomplished!," again invoked the apocalyptic theme: "We do not know the day of final victory, but we have seen the turning of the tide." Here "day of final victory" does double duty, communicating to evangelical Christians that the war with Iraq is embedded in an eschatological sequence of events leading to the "end times," but to non-evangelicals merely that this is only one battle in a longer engagement. The speech ended by citing the Hebrew Bible: "In the words of the prophet Isaiah, 'To the captives, 'come out' — and to those in darkness, 'Be free.'" (The Book of Isaiah was a favored source for speeches of this president, and was also quoted following the explosion of the Columbia space shuttle [2/1/03]).

An additional rhetorical device employed was the distinction between practitioners of true religion and those who practice false

religion. The speech of 9/20/01 disparaged the “fringe form of Islamic extremism . . . that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam.” “Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah.” The speech from October 7, 2001 derided the “barbaric criminals who profane a great religion,” as did succeeding speeches (11/8/01, 9/11/02). Practically speaking, the statements were crucial to avoiding a public anti-Islam backlash. But they also conveyed an ideological distinction consistently drawn in the Bush speeches; there is true religion and false religion, the latter represented by the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

In sum, the post-9–11 Bush speeches often began by invoking the immediacy and force of organic civil religion, before then casting the world in the strongest possible binary terms: us/them, good/evil, civilization/barbarism, real religion/blasphemy. The binary terms were discursively linked either obliquely or explicitly to transcendent authority. In these strategic discursive shifts, organic civil religion, the shared repertoire of practices that actually presented something approximating a “collective will” in the need to give tangible form to memorialization and the sentiment of loss, was hijacked. It was hijacked by instrumental civil religion, the top-down form of civil religion in which a powerful leader harnessed contingent political objectives to transcendent authority. This helps account for why Bush’s nomination for the coming presidential election took place in New York City, and as close to September 11 as possible: by returning spatially and temporally to a the vital source of organic civil religion, and symbolically to a moment of genuine national-popular collective enthusiasm — a move depending, in classic Frazerian form, on the magic of contagion — political power could then be discursively transferred to ideologically more specific ends, most immediately that of reelection. The strategy was successful in November of 2004, as Bush won reelection over contender John Kerry by stridently linking the war in Iraq to imagery of the sacred space of Ground Zero and to the memory of his own leadership in the days immediately following.

The most used campaign image was of Bush giving directions through a bullhorn as he stood in the rubble.

Conclusion

The official speeches were a “symbolic hijacking” of a genuine social consensus built around mourning and memorializing, for political divisive instrumental ends. Perhaps such hijacking is even inevitable in the transition from popular practice to official speech, since the latter is denotative and propositional, while the former is not. The key question is not whether such hijackings will occur, but toward which ends. For example, the move from practice to discourse, from organic to instrumental civil religion, need not in every case imply a politically conservative or bellicose shift. Yet in the vast majority of cases of discourse presented by agents of the USA state since 9–11, the process of ideological distillation was devoted to military objectives, and its strategic objective was the instrumental one of generating popular support for the President and his war. This hijacking of the social force generated by organic civil religion for instrumental ends was a form of symbolic violence; it controlled representations and distorted them toward particular military objectives.

That civil religion is usually contained by symbolic or actual violence is not too surprising, and rather suggests the rarity of organic civil religious episodes. That civil religion is most typically made and maintained by coercion or the threat of it was clear even in the phrase’s initial articulation by Rousseau, though the passage is infrequently cited:

While not having the ability to obligate anyone to believe them (the articles of the civil religion), the sovereign can banish from the state anyone who does not believe them. It can banish him not for being impious but for being unsociable, for being incapable of sincerely loving the laws and justice, and of sacrificing his life, if necessary, for his duty. If, after having publicly acknowledged these same dogmas, a person acts as if he does not believe them, he should be put to death. . . . (Book IV, ch. 8)

There was no such dramatic coercion levied against citizens, though such force was certainly used against non-citizens at Abu Ghraib, probably at Guantanamo in Cuba, and possibly at Camp Bucca and Camp Cropper in Iraq. Rather, the hijacking of organic civil religious force occurred through the formation of a discourse community about the war, within which the President's official speeches were only the most disseminated and influential part, that made it appear as an inevitable chapter of the United States' national destiny.

Acts of actual physical violence in military actions were detached and fetishized in sanitized news reports filed by "embedded" and therefore partisan reporters. These became magnets that drew additional narratives — of individual heroic acts, of soldiers' leavings and homecomings, and of public displays of support — that generated their own logic and system of symbolic capital (Feldman 1991:5, 7; Palmié 2002) and, once commodified, economic value as well (Coronil and Skurski 1991:333). Old national mythologies, especially those of World War II with its clear "evil" of Nazism, were burnished to promote heroic events and figures which, when successfully imitated, yielded symbolic capital within that mythology (Apter 1997:10–15). "Hummer" automobile-sales exploded during as Operation Iraqi Freedom unfolded, as a civilian mimesis of the war's daily broadcasts,²⁰ even as the market for positive cinematic depictions of the military mushroomed, with many movies

²⁰ For two years after the war's onset, the Hummer "H2" was among the best-selling large SUVs in the USA. Commented Rick Schmidt, founder of the International Hummer Owners Group, "In my humble opinion, the H2 is an American icon . . . it's a symbol of what we all hold so dearly above all else, the fact that we have the freedom of choice, the freedom of happiness, the freedom of adventure and discovery, and the ultimate freedom of expression. . . . Those who deface a Hummer in words or deed deface the American flag and what it stands for." Added Travis Patterson, "To me the Hummer, the H1, is the most American vehicle on the planet. It oozes patriotism. You put some flags on the Hummer and drive down the road and everyone is honking and waving at you" (*New York Times* 4/5/03).

produced with Pentagon or official military help (e.g., “Black Hawk Down,” “Tears of the Sun,” “War of the Worlds”).²¹

As the discourse community of war grew, the practice of viewing the military imagery transmitted “live” on television became itself a kind of ritual practice, a symbolic and interpretive discourse, or “semio-technique” (Feldman 1991:261), through which “Iraq” was interpellated into the US cultural repertoire precisely through its destruction. To be sure, the destruction was a sanitized version, with actual images of dead Iraqi civilians, their numbers or names, edited out. Watered by the stream of edited images, an imagined community flowered, as each American came to view herself as a member of a vast army of viewers and readers simultaneously consuming the same images and reacting to them similarly (Anderson 1991). “9–11” and the “War on Terror” became a meta-fictional funnel through which all information was siphoned. The world was remade as a field of endless battles, reproduced in state spectacles, cinema and endless television updates where, larger than life, its truth value was rendered nearly irresistible (Apter 1997:14).

Nearly, but not quite. The narrative chain linking 9–11 to the war was not immune to rust. As the death toll of US soldiers rose (1,733 as of June 28, 2005),²² and as Iraq’s alleged weapons of mass destruction that provided the stated justification for the war remain undiscovered, and as the public’s attention span was tested, Bush’s approval rating for his handling of Iraq sunk to forty percent (USA Today/CNN/Gallup June 24–26, 2005). We can therefore expect that President Bush and other officials will revisit Ground Zero and 9–11 as often as possible, either physically or discursively, to attempt to recharge the batteries of instrumental

²¹ “Black Hawk Down” was reportedly used both as a “pep rally” before going into battle for troops stationed in Iraq, and as a “how-to” manual by Iraqi resistance.

²² Meanwhile, the number of Iraqi dead remains unknown. Iraq Body Count Project estimates from 23,140 to 26,189 civilians dead as of July 31, 2005. (www.iraqbodycount.net/database).

civil religion by plugging it into to the site of organic civil religion — “to traverse the circuitous route from abstraction to concrete particularity and return with *more* — just as the person possessed by a spirit of the dead returns with more . . .” (Taussig 1997: 137–38; italics mine).

This, I hope, is at least a plausible interpretation of the difference between organic civil religion and instrumental civil religion, and how the latter relies for its creation on the legitimacy of the former. Civil religion can undergird a social contract by arising out of a shared repertoire of bodily action taken in response to a shared crisis, as it did in the altar-building that was indexical of organic civil religion. But it can also provide the set of strategies and discursive tools for the fundamental ideological move, the absolute distinction between “me” and “other” (Eagleton 1991:126) by which war is justified. If organic civil religion is “savage” in its materiality, instrumental civil religion savages, in so far as it promulgates and naturalizes rigid binary social classifications, affixes such classifications to transcendent terms, and spectacularizes and mythologizes war as salvific drama.

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AS SOCRATES SHOWS, THE ATHENIANS DID NOT BELIEVE IN GODS

MANUELA GIORDANO-ZECHARYA

Summary

This paper reopens the discussion of key terms of the Socratic indictment, such as “worship” or “belief,” from the point of view of Athenian religiosity. It addresses the content of the accusation itself: the main contention is that the accusations of “atheism” and “disbelief” are indeed opaque when understood against the background of the sources and in the context of Greek religiosity. The investigation includes a detailed inquiry into the categories of *faith* and *belief* and into the cultural reasons underlying the choice of these terms in Socratic scholarship.*

Athenian religion was a matter of practice, not of belief, and the conception of ‘orthodoxy’ . . . did not exist.¹

The absence of orthodoxy or fixed doctrines in Greek religion has been recognized and stated many a time since the “ritual turn” initiated at the end of the nineteenth century by W. Robertson Smith.² Nonetheless, it has been argued that the Greeks must have

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¹ Burnet 1924:5. See Sourvinou-Inwood 2003:12, 20, for the latest formulation of this same view.

² Robertson Smith 1889; Bremmer 1998; Bremmer’s valuable reflection can be usefully integrated with some of the contributions on the subject under discussion here. Among the recent publications see most notably Bell 1992; for ancient Greece see Calame 1991, especially 196–203 and Calame 1997, especially 111–16. On Greek religion see Bruit Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel 1992; Bremmer 1994.

shared “fundamental beliefs” that inspired their ritual action and that we can deduce from their main practices, such as sacrifice, libation, etc.: “one can infer from the religious institutions of the polis certain beliefs about the gods which at a minimum the worshipper must *necessarily* have held, if he were to believe that the ritual and accompanying prayers, to say nothing of his ethical conduct, had any *religious* significance”.³ The inference of belief from the mere presence of ritual relies ultimately on the scholar’s axiom that “ritual is religious and religion is belief.”

In the last twenty years or so, abundant evidence from anthropological fieldwork has shaken this long-held assumption by showing the intrinsic ambiguity and instability of opinions and symbols in connection to ritual action.⁴ In many cases ritual forms are fostered for their implicit symbolic force in promoting social solidarity, and because they *avoid* focusing on statements of belief.⁵ As

A “ritual interpretation” does not deny, however, that the Greeks shared a common religious discourse, open to ideological mobilization for various purposes.

³ Yunis 1988:39, the italics are original. The “fundamental religious beliefs” of the Athenians would be (1) the existence of the gods, (2) their interest in human affairs, and (3) the relationship based on reciprocity with the gods, 42–58. Some convergence with this position is to be found in Bremmer 1998:24, which raises the question: “Is the opposition ‘ritual’ vs. ‘belief’ not too absolute? Are rites not also a reflection of beliefs?”

⁴ Goody 1977. For a discussion of recent bibliography on this point, see Bell 1992:182–87; see also Bourque 2000, who speaks of rituals as “sites of contested meanings”, going well beyond the integrative function of ritual. The original formulation, however intuitive, of this idea is to be found in Robertson Smith 1889:15, where it is argued that, “In ancient Greece, for example, certain things were done at a temple, and people were agreed that it would be impious not to do them. But if you had asked why they were done, you would probably have had several mutually contradictory explanations from different persons, and no one would have thought it a matter of the least religious importance which of these you chose to adopt.”

⁵ As Bell 1992:184 states, “Symbols and symbolic action not only fail to communicate clear and shared understandings, but the obvious ambiguity or over-determination of much religious symbolism may even be integral to its efficacy.”

many scholars have pointed out, taking part in a ritual does not necessarily imply belief in it but it certainly raises questions about participation, correctness and empowerment processes.⁶

The Indictment Against Socrates

The indictment against Socrates illustrates clearly the aforementioned conflict of interpretations about ritual and belief in Athenian religion.

The accusation that brought the philosopher to trial reads, in my interpretation, as follows: "Socrates offends the gods that the polis worships by not worshipping them, and by introducing other, new gods."⁷

Many recent interpretations of Socrates' indictment describe it as being a charge of atheism, of not believing in the gods, of unorthodoxy, or of not recognizing the gods.⁸ In this sense Socrates has

⁶ Bell 1992; see also Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, who speak of the "unintentional intentionality of ritual action." Bell states very convincingly that there is little use in understanding ritual as an instrument of a pre-existing doctrine or ideological purpose: "ritual practices" she argues, "are themselves the very production and negotiation of power relations", a way of manipulating cultural schemes and not simply reproducing them. Cf. Bell 1992:196.

⁷ *Adikei Sokrates tous theous men he polis nomizei ou nomizon, hetera de kaina daimonia eisegoumenos*, Favorinus ap. Diog. Laert. 2.40. The letter of the text is fairly consistent in the other sources, Xenoph. *Mem.* 1.1,1; *Apol.* 10; Plat. *Apol.* 24c; Philodem. *de Piet.* 1696–7 Obbink.

⁸ The question is even more interesting as it is not uncommon to find those same scholars who show awareness of the distinctive ritual character of Greek and Athenian religion, speaking of atheism, unorthodoxy or belief in the gods when discussing the trial of Socrates. For example Finley 1968:64 states that Greek religion "had little of what we should call dogma about it, but was largely a matter of ritual and myth," and goes on to report that "Socrates was accused of a specific form of impiety; namely, that he disbelieved in the city's gods" (65). As for atheism, it is often interpreted as kainotheism, but, as I will argue later, there are important reasons to avoid this term.

been viewed as a *unicum* in Athenian history for having been condemned for his “words” and not for his actions.⁹ A full critical assessment of the relevant literature would exceed by far the limits of this paper, and in fact, the use of these terms is pervasive. Recently, for example, R.A. Bauman speaks of charges of “disbelief and new beliefs,” and “alleged atheism”; D. Cohen states that “what is at stake is belief in the gods, not rituals, not actions, but conviction, opinion, and expression”; G. Vlastos remarks that “the first two of the three charges . . . are clearly a matter of belief; the first one entirely so”; M.H. Hansen says that Socrates was accused of “not believing in the traditional Gods”; R. Parker remarks that “no argument, however, can remove the charge of atheism from the formal indictment against Socrates”; M.F. Burnyeat paraphrases the indictment as “not believing in the gods which the city believes in”; S. Price speaks of “scandalous beliefs concerning the gods.”¹⁰

At this point we can see two opposing trends: while the study of ancient Greece, along with anthropology and other humanities, is moving away from a focus on “belief” and towards questions of ritual, power relations and symbolic ambiguity, a significant portion of the studies of the trial of Socrates continue to stress the importance of “belief,” “unbelief,” and “atheism.” The subject of Socrates, then, or the incongruity of faith in a culture of ritual, can be seen as a symptom of divergent trends in this milieu of ancient Greek scholarship that I will endeavour to account for.

In brief, the reading of the indictment has undergone three main phases. Most of the discussion revolves around the expression *nomizein tous theous*, whose variant translations “believing in the gods” and “worshipping the gods as customary,” reveal a clash of models of religion: as S. Todd has remarked, “the more obvious the transla-

⁹ Parker 1996:204.

¹⁰ Bauman 1990:107; Cohen 1991:215; Vlastos 1991:293; Hansen 1995:25; Parker 1996:205, 209; Burnyeat 1997:3; Price 1999:82. See also Brickhouse and Smith 1994:179 and 2002:214.

tion the more insidious the tendency to assimilate.”¹¹ From the end of the nineteenth century until around 1930, the expression was interpreted as “honouring the gods,” focusing on its ritual sense, most probably under the influence of the ritual school.¹² In 1930, the publication of E. Derenne’s book on impiety was a veritable watershed, both for suggesting an interpretation of impiety based on doctrines and beliefs and for arguing against the ritual interpretation of the indictment, which the Belgian scholar translates as “recognizing the existence of the gods according to the custom.”¹³ This interpretation has been very successful up to the present. A third phase was initiated in 1969 by W. Fahr’s thorough investigation of the expression *nomizein tous theous*.¹⁴ In some scholars’ opinion Fahr terminates the debate regarding the meaning of the expression, in that he shows that *nomizein tous theous* is an ambiguous expression that can be interpreted either as “believing in” or “worshipping” the gods, and that impiety in the Socratic indictment was understood as holding wrong opinions about the gods. Many scholars have since stressed the political aspect of the accusation and have similarly dismissed the accusation of impiety.¹⁵

Among those who have taken the religious indictment seriously in the last two decades of scholarship on Socrates’ trial, W.R. Connor stands out as an exception in claiming that the impiety of Socrates is a ritual issue, reviving in a way the old “vulgate” but with a different understanding and awareness of the ritual aspects involved in the trial and in Greek religion in general.¹⁶ For the rest,

¹¹ Todd 1990:19, in warning against the danger of assimilation in studying legal systems.

¹² See Burnet 1924.

¹³ Derenne 1930:218, see also 217–23.

¹⁴ Fahr 1969:160–163. Fahr interprets Socrates’ accusation as a denial of the existence of gods. See also Yunis 1988:63–64; and Parker 1996:201 n. 8: “. . . the verb is poised between a reference to ‘custom, customary [worship]’ . . . and ‘belief’.”

¹⁵ For a recent good critical assessment of this position, see Brickhouse and Smith 2002:207 and n. 47–48.

¹⁶ Connor 1991; it must be noted, however, that he renders the indictment as

since Derenne's book, many scholars have employed the notions of "belief in the gods" and "atheism" in interpreting and paraphrasing the indictment that eventually led to the philosopher's death.¹⁷

Nomizein tous theous: Worshipping or Believing?

Before tackling the semantics of *nomizo*, it is important to take a closer look at the semantic field of *belief*, to see why the terms hitherto discussed are inadequate in describing a tradition such as that of Athens. The polysemy of *to believe* entails the following senses:¹⁸

- a) Asserting the truth or the existence of something or somebody, in its use "to believe that," "to believe something (a fact, a report)."
- b) Holding as a subjective opinion, to suppose, again in the verbal construction "to believe that."
- c) Having confidence in, trusting, in the expression "to believe in" and "to believe somebody."¹⁹

The peculiarity lies in the fact that the verb "paradoxically expresses both doubt and certainty"²⁰ (senses a and b). In non-religious set-

"recognizing the gods." See also Dover 1968:203, who interprets the indictment as "accept (*or* treat, practice) as normal"; and Brickhouse and Smith 1989:30–34, who translate it as "recognizes"; on these renderings, see below.

¹⁷ Derenne 1930. See *contra* Dover 1976, who seeks to demonstrate the unreliability of the sources concerning the trials against impiety. Dover argues in particular that the trials against Diagoras and Socrates are the only two that can be considered historically consistent, and that the Diopeithes' decree was an invention of Comedy. His opinion, which does not involve a change in terminology, has been widely accepted. See now, *contra*, Lenfant 2002.

¹⁸ I take the verb rather than the noun into consideration, as it is more relevant to Socrates' trial.

¹⁹ Pouillon 1979; his examination is on the French *croire*. For an analysis of English "believe" and "belief," see Needham 1972:40–44.

²⁰ Pouillon 1979:43.

tings, the context selects one of these senses; in religious settings such a selection is no longer possible. Here, the three meanings short-circuit, as it were, resulting in an ambiguous semantic conflation. In the expression “to believe in God,” unlike in the expression “to believe in a friend,” the selected sense is not only sense c), having trust in God, but also sense a), asserting the existence of God. What is therefore specific to the Christian and modern use of the word is the fact that it subsumes three senses, inextricably. Needham’s case study of Nuer language, and Pouillon’s examples from Dangaleat language, as well as the predicaments experienced by both missionaries and ethnographers in translation, demonstrate that this semantic area has the peculiarity that it is an “inexportable” product of Christian discourse.²¹

In contrast, the verb *nomizo* has three main meanings:

- 1) “To have as a custom,” “acting according to the custom.”
- 2) “Using, practicing or relating to in a customary way” (*nomizein ekklesian, anthropous*).
- 3) “Thinking, holding as customary,” particularly when it governs an infinitive.

The semantic configuration of the verb *nomizo* is centered on the meaning of “custom, tradition,” being a denominative derived from the noun *nomos*.²² It follows that the Greek *nomizo* and the English “to believe” have entirely different semantic configurations, and

²¹ Needham 1972:14–39.

²² Ostwald 1969:40 remarks, significantly, that “it is . . . immaterial to the Greek way of thinking whether in any given context *nomos* is a rule, a customary practice, or a belief; its characteristic is that it is something generally regarded and accepted as correct for a given group.” See also Ostwald 1986, especially 95–100. He argues that *nomos*, being specified as statutory norm, is used in connection to general norms and rules rather than ritual practices. On *nomos* in religious contexts see Ostwald 1969:40–43. He shows that *nomizo* and *nomimos* refer to worship, most notably prayers and sacrifices, often called *ta nomizomena*, oaths, curses and the like.

that there is overlap only in the sense b) of “to believe” and sense 3) of *nomizo*. However, if “to believe” in the sense of “holding an opinion” is applied in a religious context, as in the sentence “to believe in gods,” this would be entirely misleading; in this case, *nomizo* always refers to customary practices, and means “venerating,” “practicing the cult,” especially by means of prayer and sacrifice.²³ The confusion is the result of the Platonic innovation (see *infra*), and of the superimposition of the verb *nomizein* in the cases where it governs the infinitive, meaning “to think, to have an opinion.”²⁴

The alternative rendering “acknowledging the gods” is similarly ambiguous, because exactly what it is *about* the gods that is acknowledged remains unspecified. One does not acknowledge somebody, but some fact *about* somebody; if it were phrased “acknowledging the existence” or “acknowledging the relevance” of the gods, for example, we would be in a better position to judge the appropriateness of the translation. Thus it is clear that “acknowledging the existence of the gods” (essentially a rephrasing of sense a) of “to believe”) has little or no point of contact with the senses of *nomizo*.²⁵

The belief-centred interpretation is buttressed sometimes by reference to famous impious people condemned for their words and

²³ *Ta nomizomena hiera* are the sacrifices prescribed by tradition, *euchai hai nomizomenai* the prayers customarily requested. See the thorough investigation by Fahr 1969, *passim*, examining diachronically the religious occurrences of *nomizo* and the related semantic field, with particular attention to the expression *nomizo tous theous*. Similarly, *nomos* in a religious context describes a whole range of ritual practices, from funerary rituals (Hdt. 2.36.1) to purification (1.35.1) to temple regulations and oaths (IG 12.15.30–31). See Xenoph. *Mem.* 4.6.1: “Is it not true that he who knows the customary worship of the gods (*ta peri tous theous nomima*) will also honour the gods in the lawful way?”

²⁴ The construction is found in TrGF 1.43 F 19,42 for the first time and otherwise appears only in Plato and in Xenoph. *Mem.* 1.1.5.

²⁵ “Accepting as normal,” like “recognizing,” does not get rid of the problem arising from “acknowledging,” as it implies concepts or accepted dogmas one should recognize.

not for their actions.²⁶ The inference that “word equals belief” belongs to the modern worldview and certainly not to the Athenian, according to which “words” were an integral component of any ritual act, and subject to the same rules of impiety.

Aristophanes’ Clouds and the Question of Atheism

We shall start our investigation of the sources with Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, which traditionally has been taken to represent the accusers’ point of view, as Plato already stated in the *Apology*. *Clouds* contains, among other things, a religious accusation against Socrates interpreted by most scholars as atheism.²⁷ However, we should try to determine the propriety of this term as a historically verifiable category in fifth century Athens. The main point deriving from the relevant passages in *Clouds* is that, in Greek culture, the assertion of the inexistence of certain gods has an axiological relevance rather than an ontological one.

In the first meeting with Socrates, Strepsiades promises he would pay the philosopher whatever price, swearing by the gods (245–46). Socrates replies (247–49):

What gods are you swearing by? First of all the gods have no legal tender (*nomisma*) for us.

Strepsiades: By whom do you swear then? By iron coins, as in Byzantion?

Socrates promises to reveal the new order of divine things (*ta theia pragmata*, 250) and introduces his new pupil to the Clouds in a parodist initiation, calling them “our gods” (*tais hemeteraisi daimosin*, 253). After their epiphany, Socrates announces the new divine order and the decadence of the old one (365–67):

²⁶ Such as Diagoras of Melos who, as Lysias, 6.17, says, “committed impiety in word,” in contrast to Andocides who committed impiety “in deed.”

²⁷ For the other aspects involved in the comedy and for Socrates as a caricature of the new sophistic trend see Muir 1985, especially 211–16.

Socrates: Only these are goddesses, all the rest is vain talk

Strepsiades: But, for the Earth! Olympian Zeus is not a god for you?

Socrates: Which Zeus! Don't talk nonsense. Zeus doesn't exist (*oud'esti*)!

After a naturalistic explanation of rain, Strepsiades concludes (380–81): “Vortex? I missed that, Zeus doesn't exist and in his place Vortex is now king.” The equation *Zeus doesn't exist* = *Zeus has been usurped*, is repeated at 816–28 when Strepsiades tries to teach his son Pheidippides what he has learned, summing up: “Vortex now reigns, having kicked Zeus out” (828).

The statements about the existence of gods are phrased in terms of the opposition between valid and efficacious versus invalid and non-efficacious. The denial of a god's existence is fashioned in traditional Hesiodic terms of succession: “Zeus doesn't exist” corresponds to his usurpation or replacement by another god. This is again manifest in the following exchange between Strepsiades and his son (1468–73):

Strepsiades: . . . show respect for Father Zeus!

Pheidippides: Oh, really! “Father Zeus,” you are so old-fashioned. As if Zeus were in power (*estin*).

Strepsiades: Of course he is (*estin*).

Pheidippides: No, he is not, since Vortex reigns, having kicked Zeus out.

Strepsiades: No, he did not; it was I who thought so. . . . ²⁸

The statement that Zeus no longer exists is tantamount to de-authorizing the symbols connected to Zeus. This process does not apply exclusively to natural cosmology but particularly to the social cosmology. A god “exists” insofar as he is valid and socially

²⁸ The codified Hesiodic model of Vortex usurping Zeus implies a danger to the system of succession (see the orphic-dionysian solution). The subject evades our purpose; still we should notice that the opposition new-old entails another threat, insofar as the passage from Vortex to Zeus implies a retrogression from culture to nature, i.e., from the cultural order which Zeus guarantees to the *physis* order represented by Vortex. This inversion indicates the devaluation of the genetic cultural element in the name of *physis*, which the comedy represents by having Pheidippides beat up his father.

authoritative. In precisely this sense, the gods of the old order have lost their legal tender for Socrates and his school: as a new currency replaces the old one, it continues to exist ontologically, but no longer socially. Deauthorizing traditional gods brings about the dreadful result that, if Zeus is no longer authoritative, the oaths made in his name are no longer efficacious; at the plot level, invalidation of the traditional gods allows Strepsiades to reach his goal of not paying his debts. The issue of oaths was as all-important in Athenian society as it was in the comedy: the oath represented what was most crucial for the stability of social relations.²⁹ The strict connection between gods and oaths was already evident at 246–48, where denial of a god was tantamount to invalidating an oath. In this respect it is particularly significant that, in the same scene, Socrates' explanation of the new divine order comes as the answer to Strepsiades' question "by which god do you swear?" By the same token, the identification between Zeus, Olympian gods, and oaths appears in the dialogue between Strepsiades and Pheidippides (825ff.), as well as in Strepsiades' argument against his creditors where the lampoon of oaths results in the impossibility of collecting the debts.

In addition to the axiological plane, the non-existence of a god is asserted in terms of cultic oblivion.³⁰ When Strepsiades declares himself ready to join the think-shop way of life, the Clouds question him (423f.):

And you shall not worship (*nomieis*) another god but us:

Chaos, the Clouds and the Tongue, and just these three?

Strepsiades: And not a word with the others, not even if I'd met them by chance:

no sacrifices, nor libations or incense offerings.

²⁹ On the importance of oaths see Giordano-Zecharya 2004.

³⁰ Similarly, the order of Zeus made Cronus and the Titans nonexistent in the sense of invalid, crossed out of the cult. Strictly speaking, if a god does not exist, he or she cannot be replaced.

The centrality of line 423 for the interpretation of Socrates' trial must be stressed: the Clouds use the same expression as the indictment, *nomizein theon*, and Strepsiades' answer leaves no doubt as to the meaning of "venerating a god" in terms of the practice of cultic acts.³¹ Furthermore, we find in this passage a request for an *exclusivity* of cultic relationship, which is the form kainotheism takes in the comedy, and which corresponds to the foundation of a new moral and educational order. Dover argues that the portrait of Socrates as an atheist is inconsistent, insofar as his rejection of traditional gods means venerating others, but the inconsistency appears only when using a modern model of *atheism as ontological denial* to understand Socrates' attitude. The comedy provides us with an emic view on Socrates' religious position: he is a god-despiser³² and a god-offender as Strepsiades cries out while setting fire to the think-shop in the last scene, 1506–8:

Strepsiades: How dare you teach offending (*hybrizete*) the gods
and spying on the bottom of the moon?
Chase, beat and hit them, for all their crimes,
but especially for doing injustice (*edikoun*) to the gods.

In these lines the main charge against Socrates and his school appears to be the insulting (*hybrizein*) and wronging of the gods (*adikein*, the same verb used in the indictment), rather than the denial of their existence or the introduction of new gods.

The first form of denying the existence of a traditional god is of an axiological nature, while the second is equal to cultic interruption; both result in a devaluation of the social order which the god

³¹ Cf. also 804ff. Muir 1985:213, translates the line as "believe in no other gods but ours," and later takes this line as representative for *nomizein* used in Diopieithes' decree: "... those who did not admit the practice of religion, the Greek word *nomizein* is the same one used by Aristophanes for believing in the gods," 215. In this statement it is again evident how deeply the notion of belief is engrained in any discourse on religion, to the point of using this term as a synonym for religious practice.

³² See 225–30 and the play on words *periphrono-hyperphrono*.

guarantees and of which it constitutes an efficacious symbol. No-where is there a statement about ontology or about the worshippers' thoughts or spiritual adherence to the content of a dogma. In sum, the various approaches to affirming or denying gods presented in *Clouds* do not fit well with the ontological implications of atheism.³³

Xenophon's Account: When Believing is Doing

The way Xenophon conducts his defence of Socrates against the first part of the accusation is perfectly in line with a ritualistic interpretation.³⁴ Xenophon glosses the text of the accusation with ritual arguments:

What evidence did they dispose of in arguing that he didn't venerate the gods of the polis? In fact, he openly sacrificed at home, often on the common altars of the polis and he never hid the fact that he used divination. (*Mem.* 1.1.2)

I wonder, judges, on which piece of evidence does Meletus state that I do not worship the gods the polis worships, since whoever happened to be close to me, as Meletus did, saw me sacrificing in common festivals and on public altars. (*Apol.* 11)

As for his behaviour towards the gods, it's patent that his actions and words were coherent with Pythia's responses on sacrifices, the cult of the ancestors or other similar matters. As a matter of fact, she responds that he who acts according to polis' custom is pious, and this is how Socrates acted and invited others to act. (*Mem.* I.3.1)³⁵

³³ I cannot investigate but cursorily the question of atheism in Greece, which demands a study in its own right. For an overview of the sources and bibliography cf. Winiarczyk 1984 and 1990, whose interpretation of atheism differs considerably from mine. As a general remark, I submit that one should refrain from using the word atheism, at least in all the cases where another, more precise term, is available (e.g., kainotheism).

³⁴ See Burnet 1924:104ff.

³⁵ Cf. *Mem.* 4.3.16. In 4.6.1, another dialogue between Euthydemus and Socrates about the definition of piety, an *eusebes* is a man "who honours the gods," not according his own will but according to "customs that tell how to honour the gods." See also 4.6.2–4 for the insistence on the centrality of behaving customarily.

Finally, in the *Apology's peroratio*, Socrates declares himself to be perfectly at peace, as it has not been demonstrated that he had ever committed (*pepoieka*) any of the acts attributed to him. In particular, “it has never been proven that I sacrificed to new gods instead of Zeus or Hera or the other gods, or that I swore in their names or mentioned other gods” (*Apol.* 11). From these passages, we can confirm that the accusation related to *nomizein* concerned the omission of Athenian customary worship, and the illegitimate veneration of different gods both by means of sacrifices and oaths, and by spreading this behaviour through his teaching.³⁶ Thus, Aristophanes and Xenophon concur in drawing a picture that Socrates was accused of irregularity in worship.

Plato's Semantic Turn

So “modernly” persuasive and well-written is Plato's *Apology* that many later interpreters have held it to be the most reliable behind-the-scenes account of the trial.³⁷ However, Plato's version is noteworthy for his non-ritualistic interpretation of the charge, diverging clearly from Xenophon's.³⁸ In various places of the *Apology*, Plato uses the traditional expression *nomizein tous theous* that we may interpret as worshipping the gods, particularly when he discusses Meletus' accusation (24 c): “Socrates is a wrongdoer first because he corrupts the young and does not worship the gods the city worships, but other new deities.”³⁹

Once Socrates starts defending himself against this particular charge,

³⁶ But cf. *Mem.* 1.1.5, where Xenophon uses the expression *nomizein tous theous einai*, in contrast to the rest of the analyzed occurrences. Gigon 1953:7ff., explains this as a direct influence from Plato.

³⁷ As remarked already by Finley 1968:61; see also Price 1999:85.

³⁸ See on this divergence Hansen 1995, especially 6, and Vlastos 1991:291–93. It is quite unclear on which passages Cohen 1991:213 bases his assumption that “the definition of *asebeia* as unorthodox belief forms the basis of the trial in the accounts of Xenophon and Plato.”

³⁹ Cf. also *Apol.* 18c, 23d, 27a, and 26b.

he transforms the expression *nomizein tous theous*, “to worship the gods,” into *nomizein tous theous einai*, “to think the gods do not exist”⁴⁰ The verb *nomizo* is therefore no longer used in the sense of “practicing as customary” governing an accusative, but of “thinking that,” governing an infinitive clause.⁴¹ This transformation reverberates throughout the whole Platonic interpretation, as if *einai* were implied in all the occurrences of *nomizein tous theous*. This is a Platonic innovation, and should therefore be considered as such.⁴² Plato could not change the letter of the indictment but managed to warp it to his own ends, thus avoiding the need to respond to the accusation of impiety.

The Socrates of Plato argues that the accusation is inconclusive: if he is accused of introducing new gods, this implies the existence of the latter, equating in what follows the terms *daimonia*, *daimones* and *theoi*. The existence of one category (*theous*) should be logically assumed from the existence of the other (*daimonia*), as the particular is to be assumed from the existence of the general. He brings the accuser to self-contradiction (*Apol.* 14), making Meletus seem to accuse Socrates of denying the existence of gods, although asserting their existence in another way. Plato twists the charge on its head, makes it contradictory and thus inconclusive, disparaging it as a veiled attempt to hinder and punish Socrates for his successful, insinuating, and scornful pedagogical and political influence. As for the religious accusation, however, he simply avoids addressing the issue of ritual behaviour, much as he side-steps the charge of introducing and venerating non-Athenian gods. Some scholars account for these omissions by supposing that Socrates was actually guilty from the Athenian point of view, though nonetheless a just and pious man in more universal terms. Others claim that Socrates worshipped the same gods Athens worshipped

⁴⁰ *Apol.* 26bff.

⁴¹ Cf. Fahr 1969:131–57 for a full account of this Platonic transformation.

⁴² For *Eur. Supp.* 731–32, see Yunis 1988:65 n.18.

but with a different theological interpretation.⁴³ These patent incongruities have perhaps contributed to the view shared by most scholars that the accusation was merely a façade to hide political motivations.⁴⁴

The fact that Plato omits speaking about the cultic behaviour of Socrates — an omission remarked by many scholars — is indeed revealing: with regard to customary cultic practice, it is far from understood that Socrates would have been a model of orthopraxy, as assumed recently by M. McPherran.⁴⁵ As I have already stated, the appraisal of the actual religious behaviour of Socrates is beyond the subject of this paper; what matters here is the fact that Plato purportedly side-steps any discussion of Socrates' cultic behaviour towards the gods of the city. To this end he bases his defence against Meletus' statement on an ontological ground, changing the very wording of the indictment. What is most noteworthy is the broad modern acceptance of Plato's wording, instead of the official version reported by all witnesses, *including Plato*. The scholars adopting Plato's personal interpretation very rarely justify or even mention the choice of the Platonic over the received version. A possible explanation for this otherwise unaccountable omission will be explored in the conclusion.

⁴³ For the first position cf. Beckman 1979 and 1983; for the second position cf. Bodéüs 1989, McPherran 2002. McPherran reconstructs a picture of the "real" Socrates from the Platonic dialogues. His participation in the civic cult was in accordance with the Athenian way, mostly through prayer and sacrifice, but with a different interpretation of these cultic acts (undermining the assumption of reciprocity between gods and men). McPherran's interpretation of piety as "an internal matter pertaining to the soul" (176) seems to refer to a Platonic discourse which has little bearing on the Athenian point of view.

⁴⁴ Vlastos 1991 and Burneyat 1997 highlight that Plato's silence on Socrates' behaviour towards Athenian gods may be regarded as a sign that he was actually guilty of not believing in the gods the city believes in. Vlastos 1991:41 argues in particular "that he believes in the gods is clear enough; that he believes in the gods of the state he never says." Burneyat 1997:7ff. highlights the insistence on the term "god," arguing for a "monotheistic" position for Socrates. Both scholars clearly utilize a belief-centred interpretation of the indictment.

⁴⁵ McPherran 2002.

Piety on Trial

The final point concerns the legal aspect of the trial, and in particular the likelihood of an accusation of impiety, *asebeia*, in the form of an ontological or belief-centred argument. In this respect we should recall that in Athenian trial procedures the defence rested on rhetoric as much as the accusation; both rested on the capacity of the speaker to persuade the judges of the truth of his case. Although the charge of “impiety” was vaguely understood as wrongdoing against gods, parents and fatherland, the Athenian criminal statutes do not define the conduct that constitutes impiety, as was the case for most offences, “but rather *assume* a definition which such words imply.”⁴⁶ In other words, the definition was entirely subject to the evaluation of the judges, who, it should be borne in mind, were private citizens with no legal expertise whatsoever. As R.E. Allen has effectively clarified “. . . the Athenian system was unbound, except persuasively, by precedent: the elements of impiety were what *a simple majority of the dicasts on any given day thought was impious*.”⁴⁷ Having said that, it follows that the majority of jurymen would have had difficulty understanding a charge of *asebeia* based on a denial of gods’ existence, and even more the subtle elenctic refutation provided by Socrates; in contrast, Xenophon’s account is more plausible and consistent with the Athenian perspective. As Connor has highlighted, religious issues were prominent in the remaining speeches from the year 399 BCE, where impiety referred to ritual matters of sacrifice and profanation.⁴⁸ In a speech against Nicomachus, a secretary who rewrote the sacrificial calendar of Athens in the “Socratic” years 403–399, Lysias argues that,

⁴⁶ Cohen 1991:208.

⁴⁷ Allen 1996:6.

⁴⁸ Connor 1991:51–52. Cf. Andocides 1 and Lysias 30. For an overview of the years of Socrates’ trial see Musti 1992:468–78, where the author also exhorts us to “reduce Socrates to his historical dimension and reflect upon the environment where he lived” (475).

on the subject of religiosity (*peri eusebeias*) we should certainly not learn from Nicomachus, but we should take into account the tradition. Our ancestors in this respect handed over to us the greatest and happiest city of Greece by sacrificing only according to the content of the *kyrbeis*: it is therefore just that we perform the same sacrifices they performed, if only for the good fortune they derived from those sacrifices. (30.18)⁴⁹

This passage also sheds light on one of the main points of Socrates' indictment, namely the importance of maintaining the same form of cult as existed in the Athens of "glorious past." In this period, the more Athenian self-image crumbled, the more crucial became the need to reconstruct an identity capable of retrieving a sense of continuity with the past — however imagined and symbolic. The indictment expresses the need for continuity by attempting to exorcise a perceived threat to the connection between future and past: religious innovation was considered to undermine the link with the past and corruption of the young to sabotage the future. We can conclude that the trial of Socrates hinged on cultic matters, related both to his personal conduct and to the spreading of this behaviour through successful teaching.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ The definition of pious behaviour hinges on following traditional cult and common interest. Lysias continues, "is there a more pious man than I who wants to sacrifice according to the ancestors' way . . .?" (30.19). If personal piety is untestable from an empirical viewpoint in a belief-centred model of religion, in ancient Athens, as we can deduce from this passage, religious behaviour is empirically determinate: if you sacrifice and perform the cult according to the rules of your city, you are *eusebes*.

⁵⁰ This is clearly what is referred to in the charge of "corrupting the young," and in Lysias' mention of the fact that Socrates was condemned for his words. It is beyond the scope of this paper to tackle the question of "who Socrates really was and what he said," including the question of his defence speeches. The endeavour to measure the distance between the Socrates of the accusers and the Socrates of the apologetics must be another quest.

*The Category of "Belief"*⁵¹

The terms "belief," "to believe," and "faith" have come to represent *the* distinctive features of religion, or an inescapable term of reference. Today, however, the history of these terms is no longer a *terra incognita*.⁵²

More than thirty years ago, R. Needham argued against the use of the terms related to "belief" in describing other cultures since they represent an undeclared and misleading generalization about a concept otherwise immaterial to non-Christian cultures. These terms, he argues, are far from representing a universal category or feature of human nature; rather they constitute *the* idiosyncratic category of the Christian understanding of religion.⁵³

We may add that what is beyond translation is not one singular sense of the word "belief," but precisely the conflation of three meanings into one word, as previously mentioned. This conflation is the outcome of a unique and specific historical process related

⁵¹ I will provide only a summarily account of the question. For a more extensive treatment cf. Needham 1972:40–50, and Pouillon 1979:43–51.

⁵² Similarly Sabbatucci 1990:5 claims that, "The history of religions has questioned the objects of faith but never faith in itself. . . . Faith in something, no matter what, would seem, the heart of each religion". This monograph, however uninformed about most of the scholarship we are discussing, has the merit of putting the concept of faith in an historical perspective, as born out of an historical phenomenon, the early martyr "confessors" and the specific soteriological connotations it is fraught with. See Needham 1972:21.

⁵³ The label "Christian" is used in this paper with the specific intent of bringing the terms related to *belief* and *faith* back to their historical origin. With this disclaimer in mind, however, it is apparent that the use of this label does not negate the fact that any person brought up in a Western environment may use "Christian" terms and categories regardless of their personal religious identity. Needham's valuable monograph represents, to the best of my knowledge, the most thorough investigation of this question. See also Luckman 1971, which questions the usefulness of this term, and speaks of a "misapplication" of these categories to "archaic societies." His critique of "belief" is however limited by the use of an evolutionistic model.

to the development of Christianity, particularly the accretion of the sense of *asserting and accepting a type of existence* that is rationally and empirically unaccountable for, to the sense of *trusting*.⁵⁴ R. Bultmann has succinctly expressed this as follows: “In the OT the righteous (in faithfulness and obedience) believe in God on the basis of His acts. . . . In the NT, however, it is precisely God’s act which has to be believed.”⁵⁵

This idea of trust is somehow closer to the Roman than to the Christian conception of *credere* in the sense, as C. Grottanelli has described it, of having trust in a bond of reciprocity “where gods were both creditors and debtors.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ King 2003:277, tackling the problem of belief and Roman religion, sees a contradiction in Needham’s conclusion that the term *belief* is of no benefit for analysis. In particular, he stresses that, “if ‘belief’ is specifically Western or Christian . . . then it must have a specific meaning or an identifiable range of meanings. Otherwise, how would one know whether the concept is Christian?” However, King not only simplifies, almost beyond recognition, the complexity of Needham’s arguments (see for example Needham 1972:122–24), but he appears to miss the issue of the semantic status of *belief* as I have outlined it. The paper presents otherwise interesting models for understanding Roman religion as a non-Christian religion, though with the basic shortcoming of neglecting Linder and Scheid 1993, which is the most important contribution on the very same subject of belief and Roman religion, see *infra*.

⁵⁵ Bultmann 1968:215. Evans-Pritchard 1956:9 has expressed a similar difficulty about the use of *believe* in his description of Nuer religion: “God’s existence is taken for granted by everybody. Consequently, when we say, as we can do, that all Nuer have faith in God, the word ‘faith’ must be understood in the Old Testament sense of ‘trust’ There is in any case, I think, no word in the Nuer language which could stand for ‘I believe’.”

⁵⁶ Grottanelli 1989–90:48; building on Benveniste’s analysis of *credere*, the scholar tackles, among other things, the question of reciprocity and trust as understood in the Latin verb. In Grottanelli 1994, he extends his analysis to the notions of credence (as expressed in *credo*) and credit, thereby connecting trust in a god and contractual obligation which amount to the reciprocity based relationship of humans and gods. See *infra* for the history and transformation of this connection in relation to Plato.

In addition to the semantic dimension, J. Pouillon has explored the cosmological assumptions implied in belief-statements. He shows that the distinction between belief in God and belief in a friend is rooted in the cultural distinction between a natural world and a supernatural world. "In our culture," Pouillon argues, "such a distinction seems so characteristic of religion — both for those who refuse it and for those who accept it — that religion and in particular the so-called primitive religions are currently defined by beliefs in supernatural powers and the cult given to them."⁵⁷

Moreover, this distinction entails two distinct modes of existence: the existence of man and man's world, and the existence of God and God's world. The difference between them is more an ontological gulf than a separation; consequently, we apprehend these two planes of existence through two separate modalities: perception and belief, with existence in the natural world on one hand being perceived, and the ultra-mundane world of God being believed in on the other. Belief-statements refer to an absolute reality, inaccessible to empirical perception.

In a belief-centred model of religion, the truth expressed in a religious dogma "does not relate to the ordinary matter-of-fact world of everyday things but to metaphysics,"⁵⁸ and religious tenets such as the existence of God are, in the terms of M. Southwold, "empirically indeterminate," not being open to empirical verification.⁵⁹ Yet, if we turn to Greek material, the situation is very different; gods are all but metaphysical, merged as they are in the interconnectedness of the world, visible and present in every aspect of the world and human activity.⁶⁰ Zeus' existence is not empirically indeterminate,

⁵⁷ Pouillon 1979:44.

⁵⁸ Leach 1967: 45.

⁵⁹ Southwold 1978:633 and *passim*. This view is consistent with the definition of Christian faith as "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

⁶⁰ For extensive treatments of these aspects of Greek gods and cosmology, see Vernant 1974:117ff., and 1995:5–12; Oudemans and Lardinois 1987: 92–96 and *passim*.

insofar as Zeus coincides with so many aspects of daily life: to deny the gods would be to deny the world altogether. This is the pivotal point of the semantic issue being addressed in this paper: the analysis of a culture in terms of belief implies that the same dualistic cosmological model governs the culture under examination. The projection of the emic category of belief results, therefore, in a manifest heuristic fallacy, since the dichotomy is nowhere to be found in non-monotheistic cultures.

M. Linder and J. Scheid, in their insightful review of Roman religion from the point of view of belief, describe Roman “belief” as an act, a *savoir faire* rather than a *savoir penser* (giving their paper the programmatic title “Quand croire c’est faire”). Their analysis is successful in sketching the distinctive features of both Roman and Christian religions, and by writing “faith” and “belief” in quotation marks they help to maintain a distance from these terms. However, this contribution falls short of calling fully into question the usefulness of the notions of belief and faith. The scholars seek out those religious and social tenets that might stand for Christian beliefs: again, this has the effect of implicitly accepting the discourse of belief as the objective unit of measurement, however stretched and upturned, of a religion *qua* religion.⁶¹

In attempting to use the term “belief” productively, we could strive to make a careful distinction, as does Southwold who equates believing with “holding as true”; however, we would always run the risk of conflating meanings on our own behalf or on that of our

⁶¹ Linder and Scheid 1993:50. Interestingly, the authors seem to employ an “apologetic” tone, defending Roman religion against the Christian-borne charge of being a cold and empty religion. See particularly 48 and 57 where, concluding their arguments, they say, “S’il faut chercher dans les mentalités romaines du début de l’ère chrétienne une foi semblable à celle des religions révélées, ce n’est donc pas dans l’appareil religieux proprement dit qu’il faut la chercher. . . . La “foi” des Romains était plus large et englobait le religieux” (58). Here, it seems evident that belief and faith are accepted as a universal category.

audience.⁶² King proposes to define belief as a “conviction that an individual (or group of individuals) holds independently of the need for empirical support.”⁶³ This definition, if it is such, further confuses Christian and non-Christian contexts. Moreover, I cannot see why we should continue using a term, however traditional and evocative, at the risk of warping our understanding, particularly since other terms such as *conviction*, *opinion* or *understanding* are available. As Pouillon states, we would be using a category that “isn’t even clear for us, or at least is a disintegrated category, whose disintegration is precisely *a singular cultural phenomenon*.”⁶⁴

To conclude this assessment, the polysemic conflation and the dualistic cosmology inherent in the term *belief* make the use of this category a heuristic fallacy. I suggest therefore that the term be carefully avoided in referring to non-monotheistic religious traditions, since *belief* is not one of those “scholarly constructs of which the definitions remain up for negotiation and adaptation.”⁶⁵ We cannot easily escape the cognitive condition in which the uncritical use of cultural keywords results in the projection of an implicit model upon the reality studied.

Conclusion

As the examination of Socrates’ indictment has shown, in ancient Greece it would be better to speak of a community of performers rather than a community of believers.⁶⁶

“Greek religion” is, in turn, to be understood primarily as civic in the sense that the municipal, local dimension saturates all its spheres;

⁶² Southwald 1978:628, 631.

⁶³ King 2003:278.

⁶⁴ Pouillon 1979:47, my italics.

⁶⁵ See Bremmer 1998:30, referring to the terms “religion” and “ritual.”

⁶⁶ To paraphrase a famous Herodotean definition, Greeks are those who sacrifice in the same way and share the same idea of sacred space: Hdt. 8.144.2.

the gods were one with their *polis* and its citizens, *politai*.⁶⁷ Posited at the opposite end of the ecumenical purview of Christianity, Greek religiosity measures piety by adherence to the custom of the city, the *nomos poleos* as Xenophon puts it, and what matters is “to worship the gods the way *the polis* itself worships.” Definitions of piety and impiety depend therefore on what polis you belong to and not on what you believe in or how.⁶⁸

Looking at the trial from the Athenian point of view, it is noteworthy how incongruent Plato’s account is in this respect, and we might wonder why the Platonic interpretation of the indictment has been so successful, as opposed to those of Xenophon and Aristophanes.⁶⁹ G. Vlastos has argued that Socrates’ gods were contrary to Athenian tradition, in that they were entirely good and moral, stripped of their fundamental ambiguity and somehow rationalized.⁷⁰ I agree with Brickhouse and Smith on the anachronism of this view: “There is no ancient evidence for supposing that his contemporaries were troubled by Socrates’ alleged ethical trans-

⁶⁷ The focus of Greek religious life was the worship of the gods and that relied ultimately on the customs and laws, oral and written, of the city and/or the group or subgroup to which each individual belonged. For an insightful account of actual workings of this system see Sourvinou-Inwood 1990 and 1988, a ground-breaking contribution to the understanding of Greek religion. For Athenian religion, see Parker 1996.

⁶⁸ If we would really want to infer an accepted religious tenet from ancient Greece, that would be: you shall sacrifice appropriately to the gods according to the rules of your *polis*; or in the sense that Linder and Scheid have outlined for Roman religion, Greek piety “était avant tout un acte. C’était un savoir-faire et non un savoir-penser” (Linder and Scheid 1993:50).

⁶⁹ This, however, does not imply that he was wrong in his portrayal of the historical Socrates. On the contrary, I am inclined to think that he may have been more reliable in this respect than the other sources. His adherence to Socrates’ actual position may account for his wilful distortion of the Athenian point of view on the trial. Once again, what is at stake in this paper is the Athenian *perception* of Socratic religiosity and not Socrates’ religiosity.

⁷⁰ Vlastos 1991.

formation of the gods, *however revolutionary that transformation may seem to us.*"⁷¹

I would further argue that it is precisely the relevance to *our* conception of religiosity that has made the Platonic version so authoritative, despite its incongruence with the other accounts. Socratic religiosity *iuxta* Platonic understanding contains an outstanding degree of Christian "anticipation." Socrates is represented as spreading an idea of piety as service to gods without any personal advantage, a selfless worship that, unlike contemporary Athenian practice, does not aim to attain a personal benefit, and is more or less explicitly evaluated as a superior conception of religion in this respect. A good example is Vlastos' account of Socratic piety: "From religion as Socrates understands it magic is purged — all of it, both white and black. In the practice of Socratic piety man would not pray to god, 'My will be done through thee,' but 'Thy will be done through me'."⁷² In this passage Christian undertones emerge quite clearly, as well as derogatory assessments of Greek religion, labelled "magic" in Frazerian fashion. Stripping the relationship with gods from any form of "credit" from Greek religiosity may be seen as a Socratic-Platonic innovation taken up later by Christianity.⁷³

I would add that Socrates has been seen specifically as a *figura* of Jesus by many Christian authors.⁷⁴ This association lies presumably in the fact that both figures sustain an allegedly superior religiosity to the one of the culture of their times, and both are met with an allegedly radical opposition by their own people. This more or less hidden comparison leads to a devaluation of the peoples in question for not having recognized the superiority of the

⁷¹ Brickhouse and Smith 2002:211, my italics.

⁷² Vlastos 1996:155–56.

⁷³ Grottanelli 1994:673.

⁷⁴ See the sources on Socrates as prefiguration of Jesus from Justin to Clement, gathered in Giannantoni 1971:499ff.

new religion. For example, Burnyeat states that Socrates' condemnation shows "the impiety of Athenian religion," adding that,

What the Athenians, from within that religion, inevitably saw as his wronging the city was the true god's gift to them of a mission to improve their souls, to educate them into a *better religion*. They judged as they did out of ignorance. For they had the *wrong religion*, and he was the first martyr for the *true religion*. . . .⁷⁵

Interestingly, the terms chosen in Burnyeat's assessment of Socratic as opposed to Athenian religious positions seem to reproduce the Christian opposition of *vera* and *falsa religio*.⁷⁶

The trial of Socrates is a subject that rouses a high degree of moral involvement in many scholars, sometimes at the expense of maintaining the appropriate distance from the historical object. While such an involvement may not be undesirable in itself, it easily leads to a misuse of contemporary categories in interpreting the past.

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⁷⁵ Burnyeat 1997:10, my italics.

⁷⁶ See Bremmer 1998:10, on this opposition.

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ELOQUENT BODIES: RITUALS IN THE CONTEXTS OF ALLEVIATING SUFFERING

ANNE-CHRISTINE HORNBERG

Summary

It seems that the revitalization of traditional rituals has been an effective way of developing a new embodiment and identity. The ability of the Canadian Mi'kmaq Indians to rework the cultural body, historically imposed on them by the dominant society, opens the way to weeding out destructive patterns unconsciously or consciously embedded historically in their bodies. The ritual opens up opportunities to explore new habitus and to employ the body in a domain shared with like-minded peers so as to facilitate new ways of approaching the world. The rituals thus provide redemptive opportunities for bodies that have been disempowered by hegemonic contexts, and simultaneously offer social affirmation of the new way of being in the world.

My aim in this article is to discuss the significance of the mindful body as an active agent in ritual practices, situated in specific social contexts and historical circumstances. I take a critical stance to intellectualism, which has defined the body as a passive object and, as such, only a reflection of ideas and symbolic meanings manifested in ritual practices. By contrast, phenomenology has shown that it is with a mindful body and somatic modes of attention that we approach the world and that bodies are active in learning and remembering. It is not only our mind that constructs identities and “imagined communities”; our body is at work simultaneously, and the Cartesian split between mind and body has generated blind alleys in ritual studies. According to psychiatrist David Bathgate, cognitive science has opposed this dualism, stating that the concept of a disembodied mind is misleading: “Mind is conceived of as an interactive process involving brain, body and world, in reciprocal

interactions of mutual causality.”¹ If we consider the notion of mindful bodies, rituals become important means for healing, since the performance situates the participant in a shared domain where new ways of approaching the world may be experienced. I will base my discussion of the importance of bodily experiences and agency in ritual practice on cases primarily taken from my field studies conducted in Canada among the Mi’kmaq Indians (1992–1993, 1996, 2000), but I will also discuss comparative examples from my fieldwork in Tonga (1998, 2001).

Learning Through the Body

Western education is traditionally perceived as a highly intellectual pursuit, which has led to the fallacy that it is only by using our mind that we may progress in learning and problem solving. If you become mentally dysfunctional, you go to a therapist and attend regular sessions, so the words (intellectual insights) will take the pain away.² Ritual healing among “the others” is viewed with curiosity: at best, there is some recognition that it appears to make people feel better; at worst, this bodily praxis is dismissed as a

¹ Bathgate 2003:277; see also McGuire 1996:1, Gordon 1988, and Kirmayer 1988.

² I am aware that it is a bit drastic to dismiss psychoanalysis as a highly verbal affair, and that analysts such as Reich (1949) have introduced another approach to therapy, but my point is that the more mental approaches have been over-emphasised in healing a person. Note, for example, the title in Marie Cardinal’s bestseller, *Le mots pour le dire* (“The Words to Say It”). Psychiatrist David Bathgate claims that much of psychiatric thinking has been bedevilled by Cartesianism. Even the term “psychosomatic” implies a dualism between psyche and soma (body and mind). It is a misleading question to ask how a person’s mind interacts with his or her body (Bathgate 2003:282). Bathgate even dismisses traditional psychodynamic practice on the grounds that, although it focuses on meaning, there is a split “this time involving the rational reflective therapist and a patient who may talk about the body but does so in a symbolically significant physical setting that isolates the actual body” (283).

primitive artifact, based on magical beliefs. But we must ask ourselves: do we learn by practice and can bodies think and memorize?³ Have we, because we live in a society of Western literacy, overvalued cerebral learning and dismissed basic bodily experiences? Could it be that cognition is “not the representation of a pre-given world by a pre-given mind but is rather the *enactment* of a world and a mind on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that a being in the world performs”?⁴ Meredith McGuire calls for a greater awareness among scholars of how our body becomes a locus for societal and political uses. She asks for a “new conceptualization of a mindful body” and states that “believers (and non-believers) are not merely disembodied spirits, but that they experience a material world in and through their bodies.”⁵ If we accept that learning and memorizing do not emanate from an active mind in a passive body, we may come closer to understanding the importance of rituals and how embodied memories and experiences can be reworked into new ways of being in the world — and, in the aftermath of our reorientation, serve as a focus for reflection.

Csordas maintains that anthropologists, in their studies of how humans perceive the world, have commonly paid special attention to visual perception. This has led to a neglect of the study of how senses interplay. Perception is more than a function of cognition.⁶ I will give two examples of learning by practice that suggest the importance of acknowledging the body as a “field of perception and practice.”⁷ These embodied memories are what Connerton would refer to as habitual: “a knowledge and a remembering in the

³ According to Connerton (1989:29), scholars have focused on personal memories (e.g., psychoanalysts) or to cognitive memory (e.g., psychologists in their studies of universal mental faculties), but more or less neglected the notion of habit memory.

⁴ Varela, Thomason, and Rosch 1991.

⁵ McGuire 1990:283.

⁶ Csordas 1990:35.

⁷ Csordas *ibid.* See also Merleau-Ponty 1964:15.

hands and in the body; and in the cultivation of habit it is our body which ‘understands.’”⁸ So, imagine you are baking bread and, although you carefully follow the recipe, you fail. If you then ask someone who is good at baking about the exact amount of flour needed, this person will probably answer: “You’ll feel it.” I remember a woman who tapped her knuckles on the bread loaves when she took them out of the oven. The sound of the warm bread told her “baked” or “not ready,” but for many of us this sound is dead or meaningless noise. There is one obvious fact we may learn from this example: You become a good baker by baking, and not by reading recipes or setting the timer. You respond to the sound in deciding whether the bread is ready and you use your hand to feel the proper consistency of the dough, rather than reading the answer in a cookbook.

There are occasions when embodied memories become even more manifest. If you have learnt to play one of Chopin’s etudes by rote and occasionally get interrupted, it is nearly impossible to “think” of how to resume playing. You have to go back and start from a point where your *fingers* remember how to proceed.⁹ Mostly, we are not aware of how our body learns and memorizes in daily activities and in interacting with the environment. Although bodily practices remain unconscious to us, once we have

⁸ Connerton 1989:95. Connerton distinguishes three classes of memories. First we have the class of personal memories, embedded in specific life stories, wherein single individuals have their unique access to what happened. Next class is the cognitive memories, covering the remembrance of facts as a story, the meaning of words etc. The third and last class of memories is the habitual, like riding a bike. Once you learn it, it stays in your body. Connerton’s statement has been heavily criticized by Whitehouse (2002:134) for overlooking neuropsychological experimental research. But Connerton’s aim is not to provide neuropsychological insights, but to emphasize different kinds of knowledge and memory as a way of criticizing Cartesian dualism. Whitehouse (136) distinguishes between procedural memory — knowing how (e.g., riding a bike) — and declarative memory — knowing that (e.g., encyclopedic memory).

⁹ For a further discussion of practicing the piano and remembering strings of notes, see Whitehouse 2002:133ff.; see also Karmiloff-Smith 1992:16ff.

learnt something through our body, it continues to play an important role in how we situate ourselves in the world and how we perceive others. Csordas states that “body is not an object to be studied in relation to culture, but is to be considered as the subject of culture, or in other words as the essential ground of culture.”¹⁰ Bodily learning begins as soon as we are born (or even in the uterus!). Thus, psychiatrist Erik Erikson writes of the “greeting ceremonial” as an important interplay between the mother and the infant, a ritualization in the nursery necessary for a child to fully develop.¹¹ This ritualized behaviour is important for the affirmation of both the woman (reassurance of motherhood) and the child (becoming an individual) and illustrates how bodies constantly attend to each other. We are continuously learning from our parents, as well as in school, work or other cultural contexts. Scholars such as Marcel Mauss, Pierre Bourdieu, and Mary Douglas have closely studied the social impact on the body. The concept of *habitus*, first mentioned by Mauss and later developed by Bourdieu in his theory of praxis, has influenced many studies, especially since focus shifted from the more symbolic studies of body, to the notion of the body as a centre of social practice. Phenomenologists like Merleau-Ponty, with his notion of the pre-objective act of perception, have been a source of inspiration for Michael Jackson’s (1983) excellent study of how forms of comportment and forms of cognition interplay in the rituals of the Kuranko of Sierra Leone. Among these scholars, embodiment has constituted the methodological principle underlying the ambition to collapse the body-mind duality.¹²

¹⁰ Csordas 1990:5; see also Csordas 1997 and 2004.

¹¹ Erikson 1996:203.

¹² Csordas (1990:8) summarizes the collapse of dualities in embodiment as follows: “. . . for Merleau-Ponty the body is a ‘setting in relation to the world’ and consciousness is the body projecting itself into the world; for Bourdieu the socially informed body is the ‘principle generating and unifying all practices,’ and consciousness is a form of strategic calculation fused with a system of objective potentialities.”

Nevertheless, even where the body has been the focus in anthropological literature, Cartesian dualism has been difficult to overcome, especially in analyzing ritual and praxis. This split has had the unfortunate effect of turning the body into a passive object, detached from an active, reflecting subject. According to Jackson,

At the same time, through a reification of the knowing subject, which is made synonymous with 'society' or 'the social body', *society* is made to assume the active role of governing, utilising and charging with significance the physical bodies of individuals. In this view the human body is simply an object of understanding, or an instrument of the rational mind, a kind of vehicle for the expression of a reified social rationality.¹³

When it comes to intellectual proficiency, we are well aware of how we learn and remember. We remember learning the capital cities of Europe in geography at school, but we were not aware that the classroom also taught a "hidden agenda." Our body was being trained in discipline, in maintaining distance from other bodies, and in keeping hunger at bay until recess time. Connerton distinguishes between these two types of memory by calling the former cognitive and the latter habitual.¹⁴ Body schooling is an ongoing process and in most cases it proceeds without reflexivity or conflict within the individual, and is therefore taken for granted as the normal way of being in the world. It is only when two contrasting body cultures meet that people become aware of the social body and experience their body as uncomfortable. Individuals with upward social mobility testify to the fact that it is easier to adopt upper-class food etiquette, taste in music, and other habits of consumption than it is to adopt the walk, gestures, and movements appropriate to this new context. It was their bodies that made them feel like outsiders and they became aware of how the construction of new identities in order to be accepted and affirmed is not only a mental affair, it is very much a matter of body.¹⁵

¹³ Jackson 1983:329.

¹⁴ Connerton 1989:95; cf. n. 8.

¹⁵ Csordas 1993:140.

Not to feel at home in your body is a painful experience. Illness is one of the most obvious conditions that creates an awareness to how our body may fail to fulfil our normal expectations.¹⁶ Most physical illness is a temporary state, but there are illnesses that severely threaten important social relations or the individual's personal sense of agency, and thus the very core perception of self. Amputation, blindness or chronic pain are examples of bodily suffering. The research on chronic pain, for example, has shown that it is a "somatic reminder that things are not right and may never be right. This reminder, phenomenally situated in one's body, is inescapable."¹⁷

The suffering body is, of course, experienced differently by the victim than by the detached observer, since it is a lived experience only for the former.¹⁸ However, there are cases when the inner, subjective experience of the sufferer is consciously manifested on the outside, conspicuous to an observer. The loss of a family member in Tonga not only puts the mourner's feelings in disorder, it also throws the outward body into a chaotic state. Anyone who has visited Tonga soon becomes aware of the rules for appropriate attire and behaviour among its inhabitants. Men and women put considerable effort into their dress, especially on formal occasions such as church services or funerals. Nevertheless, when I visited one of the funerals on Ha'apai in June 2001, a daughter of the deceased showed up in total bodily disorder. Her hair was hanging loosely on her shoulders in matted locks and her *ta'ovala*¹⁹ was tied in a slovenly manner around her body. The loss of her father and her inner chaos was now also a chaos visible to the observer. The grief affected the girl's entire being-in-the-world. Her loud grief and the way she swayed her body until she threw herself down beside her

¹⁶ Dingwall 1976:98, see also McGuire 1990.

¹⁷ Hilbert 1984:370.

¹⁸ Cf. Schrag 1979.

¹⁹ *Ta'ovala* is a pandanus (a kind of palm tree) mat, tied around the body and used on formal occasions.

deceased father starkly contrasted with the other mourners' more restrained behaviour. This manner of dress and outward expression of disorder had cultural roots, of course, as a representation of grief; simultaneously, it served as a personal symbol for the girl and, as such, was loaded with strong emotion. By employing the public symbol, she could make her inner pain more obvious to other participants.²⁰ Since emotions cannot be seen, the ritual context provided an opportunity for the girl's body to be situated in a relationship (sorrow) to the world, which also affected how she was treated. The participants had to go beyond the common mode of perceiving a body, which was as a rather neutral object of their experience. Instead, they experienced the visual impact and sensed the body as a subject, filled with grief, seeking empathy and comforting interactions. There was an obvious difference between the way the participants approached the daughter and the way they approached other relatives, including the widow. When they entered the house of the deceased man, they began by articulating (in a ritualized manner) their condolences to the paternal aunt, and she responded with some comforting words. The aunt was dressed properly in traditional black and her words seemed to soothe the visitors' emotions. The daughter was not addressed directly. Her awkward appearance at the wake did not symbolize sorrow; it *was* sorrow and, as a visualized emotion, the participants related to the girl mostly by gently touching and caressing her.

*The Historical Background for Suffering Bodies —
the Mi'kmaq Case*

Illness, pain and private losses affect the body and the experience of one's self, but the bodily being is also regulated by cultural and social structures. Bourdieu refers to the body acquired by

²⁰ For an analogous example on the meaning of symbols, see Obeyesekere's discussion on private and public symbols in *Medusa's hair* (1981).

the individual through socialization as a “socially informed body,”²¹ and it is only when dissimilar socially informed bodies meet (as in the case of socially mobile persons), that the individual becomes aware of or feels bodily differences. The difference in habitus is keenly sensed by people who have been colonized and are compelled to adopt other cultural ways of bodily being-in-the-world. Since it was the Western body schemata that were taken for granted when educating the Native Americans, the colonizers also tried to impose their bodily manners on “the others.” As early as the 18th century, we can read between the lines of missionary reports the suffering and depression of Indian children when subjected to classroom discipline. The missionaries had difficulty understanding why the children became depressed, since they were well cared for, being provided with nice clothes, plenty of food and clean beds; it was the children’s bodily otherness that the missionaries failed to understand. Marie de l’Incarnation writes about the children received by the Ursulines that they “cannot be restrained and if they are, they become melancholy and their melancholy makes them sick.”²² Documents from the Jesuits, the Ursulines, and the Recollets all tell the same story of their attempts to educate the Amerindian children: they became depressed, disoriented and ran away to find their parents.²³ Furthermore, many of these children could see no point in education. A French education was not only alien to the Amerindian children’s cultural upbringing; it would also distance them from their own people’s way of life.

Historical sources inform us how close the parent-child bond was in Mi’kmaq families. Le Clercq writes, “One cannot express the tenderness and affection which the fathers and mothers have for

²¹ Bourdieu 1977:124. McGuire (1996:103) distinguishes three levels of the body; the lived or experiential, the political (linked to power) and the social body (as symbols of social meanings).

²² Marshall 1967:341; cf. Jaenen 1976:94ff.

²³ Jaenen 1976:95.

their children,”²⁴ and Denys confirms the Mi’kmaq parents’ deep devotion: “Their children are not obstinate, since they give them everything they ask for, without letting them cry for that which they want. . . . They love their children greatly.”²⁵ In fact, the Amerindians were surprised at the harsh upbringing imposed on French children. They could not understand how French mothers could send their children to boarding schools. The bodily distance they maintained with even the smallest children was a method the Amerindian likened to “porcupine-like” affection. It is the highly individualistic bourgeois societies that teach children to carefully distance their bodies from others. It begins early; already as a newborn you are given a room of your own. As you grow up, you are trained to sit neatly on your chair and not in other people’s laps. My experience from fieldwork among the Mi’kmaq and Tongan people is that children do not hesitate to get physically close and will even sit in the lap of a stranger.²⁶ This is not, as in Western society, a body habit reserved exclusively for children and their parents, close friends and relatives. The children in the missionary school (or later in compulsory school) must have felt themselves to be unwanted and unloved when they were denied physical closeness with their teachers and told, instead, to sit apart on a chair. The bodily isolation must have felt like a sure sign of rejection rather than affirmation, which might explain why these children became depressed. When their bodily sense of alienation was compounded by the more rigid mental discipline of the classroom, it was all too much for the children and they ran away into the forest, back to their families.

²⁴ Le Clercq 1968:91.

²⁵ Denys 1908:404; see also Lescarbot 1928:153.

²⁶ I also remember an occasion when my husband and I took the Tongan ferry from Nukualofa to Lifuka Island; in the chilly night on deck a little boy came from nowhere and without hesitating nestled snugly beside my husband and fell asleep.

The colonial reluctance to acknowledge other bodily habits is also evident in the Mi'kmaq reports about their experience in residential school. Isabelle Knockwood, who spent her childhood in Schubacadie Residential School, writes about a girl who was severely punished by a nun for not looking into the adult's eyes when she was addressed. Little did the nun know that it was assumed to be very arrogant for a Mi'kmaq child to stare directly into the eyes of an Elder.²⁷ A more modern instance occurred in a courtroom in the 1980s when Donald Marshall Junior was sentenced to prison for a murder he firmly denied having committed. He had to spend eleven years in prison before another man confessed to the murder and Junior could be set free. One of my Mi'kmaq friends told me that "the non-native audience said the proof of Junior's guilt was that he constantly avoided looking in the judge's eyes when he was addressed. But this was the most polite Mi'kmaq way of treating a man with dignity."

References to the painful experiences in residential schools are found in all kinds of Mi'kmaq contexts: in poems, in political speeches and, in ordinary life, in explanations of an individual's behaviour. On the reserves today, there is a harsh critique directed at mainstream society for having "whitewashed" Mi'kmaq children. The children were deprived of their language and traditions. They were punished if they spoke the Mi'kmaq language and they had to sing songs that must have been incomprehensible to them ("Columbus sailed across the sea and found this land for you and me").²⁸ The focus on remaking of the children was most obvious in the school subject Ethics. In *Instruction to teachers*, printed on Residential School registers, we thus read:

In the primary grades, instil the qualities of obedience, respect, order, neatness and cleanliness. Differentiate between right and wrong, cultivate truthful habits and a spirit of fair play. As the pupils become more advanced, incul-

²⁷ Knockwood 1992:50.

²⁸ Ibid.

cate as near as possible in the order mentioned, independence, self-respect, industry, honesty, thrift, self-maintenance, citizenship and patriotism. Discuss charity, pauperism, Indian and white life, the evils of Indian isolation, enfranchisement. Explain the relationship of the sexes to labour, home and public duties, and labour as the law of existence.²⁹

Parallel with the ideological indoctrination of the children, there was an ongoing bodily reprogramming. The body was to learn new ways of discipline, but the teacher was not sensitive to the children's longing for a family upbringing that could not be replaced by professional care and intellectual progress. The Mi'kmaq children at Knockwood's school also had to work hard on the farm that supplied them with food. For the children who had been brought up in this residential school, it was not an affectionate upbringing they would embody as a memory, but rather one of severe physical punishments, mental abuse, pain and alienation.³⁰ Isabelle Knockwood writes: "We were being forcibly disconnected from everything our parents and elders had taught us, and everything new was learned with fear."³¹ The Mi'kmaq poet Rita Joe recalls her memories of school in terms of bodily pain and fear in the poem "Hated Structure: Indian Residential School, Shubenacadie, N.S." As an adult, a visit to her old school triggered terrifying memories:

I had no wish to enter
Nor to walk the halls.
I had no wish to feel the floors

²⁹ Knockwood 1992:47f.

³⁰ Knockwood's autobiography is full of examples of severe punishment. One example is that of the Mi'kmaq boy Doug Knockwood: "One of the boys had loosened the top of the salt shaker and the whole thing spilled onto my dinner. I remember Sister Anderson stirring everything up with a spoon. Then she grabbed a handful of my hair and tilted my head back. Then she shovelled the food in my mouth until I threw up all over my clothes. When I stopped vomiting, she tilted my head back and shovelled the rest of the food in. Then I got sick after that. I don't know what made me sick. I was in infirmary for I don't know how long" (1992:38-39).

³¹ Knockwood 1992:50.

Where I felt fear
 A beating heart of episodes
 I care not to recall.
 The structure stands as if to say:
 I was just a *base for theory*
 To bend the will of children
 I remind
 Until I fall³²

Contemporary Mi'kmaq are still affected by this cultural trauma and often referred to it in our meetings;³³ but although they are aware of the ideological oppression, and try mentally to overcome it, the trauma is memorized within their bodies. And it seems that the children inherit their parents' pain. The next generation of Mi'kmaq is being brought up by parents who are still struggling with memories from their childhood, and such traumatic experiences impact their parenting. As one Mi'kmaq told me:

I know that out of the residential school situation there were a lot of people that got hurt, and they were young; they were, let's say, ten-eleven-twelve years old. When they became adults they still carried that hurt in them. They could not unleash that hurt, but they became parents; they became parents of another generation, but they kept on losing this anger and violence. And then they were drinking, trying to forget all the physical and sexual abuse that they had gone through. And the children would receive the non-love that was supposed to take place in these families.

Now we go another decade, we go to the 1980s. Children start talking to me: "What's wrong with our parents?" They were the one that were questioning their parents: "What's wrong with our dad? Why is he drunk all the time? Why can't we talk to him? This is our dad; we are supposed to be able to love him, why can't he love us? Why is he chasing us away?"

And the families broke up, so now we are faced with broken up families with alcoholism and sexual abuse and there's a lot of pain, and there's a lot of silent pain that exist in the Mi'kmaq community. And how do you handle pain?³⁴

³² Joe 1991a:75 — italics mine. I emphasize this part of the poem, since it clearly expresses the unfortunate split between theory and practice.

³³ See also Doyle-Bedwell 2002.

³⁴ Interview in Whycobah (former Whycomagh reserve) 2000.

It is important in the above case to distinguish psychosomatic diseases or post-traumatic stress disorder from cultural traumas, otherwise we may not fully see the consequences of political violence and cultural oppression.³⁵ Illness and alcoholism are reactions to colonialism and ways of expressing resistance, but are not successful, since in the end they are self-defeating.³⁶

Loss of Agency — Cultural Abuses of the Body

“Consciousness is in the first place not a matter of ‘I think that’ but of ‘I can’,” says Merleau-Ponty.³⁷ A loss of agency must, according to this statement, be a fundamental assault on our experience of self and identity.³⁸ Loss of agency is not necessarily an individual physical injury; it can also be tied to the plight of living in a hegemonic society and being subjected to such power relations. Colonization brought not only a loss of land (subsistence) for the Mi’kmaq; it also brought restrictions on their freedom to practise their traditions, including bodily practices. Thus, even the body was under the control of the British Empire, to be trained in a British manner. Instead of being an active hunter, the Mi’kmaq body was to be transformed into a farmer’s body or, in the worst cases, remain passive on the reserves, waiting for handouts. The children learned classroom discipline and, as in Residential school, even had to spend endless months without physical proximity to the bodies of parents and relatives. To the Mi’kmaq, colonization was not only an experience of mental oppression; it was simultaneously an experience of bodily alienation.

To fully appreciate the importance, to the Mi’kmaq, of reclaiming their traditions or creating new practices of their own, we must

³⁵ McGuire 1996:108; see also Kleinman 1992 and Kleinman and Kleinman 1991.

³⁶ McGuire 1996:106, Schepner-Hughes and Lock 1991.

³⁷ Merleau-Ponty 1962:137.

³⁸ See Giddens structuration theory 1984.

take into account the embodied memories of being an oppressed people. Today, the Mi'kmaq employ ritual practice and ceremonies for their healing, which raises the question of why a bodily practice is so important that more intellectual pursuits such as political claims, debates or reading books are not sufficient to heal. Roy Rappaport has defined ritual as the "basic social act"³⁹ and, of course, it is important to consider the social impact of rituals on the individual and the implications of transforming daily practice into formalized acts. Nevertheless, it is also important to examine the individual in his role as an agent. How do individuals respond to ritual acts and put them to use when creating meaning and well-being in their lives? Even though rituals are social acts and, by definition, beyond the control of a single person, it is the individual that absorbs and assimilates those acts. If we adopt a Cartesian dualism in examining healing practices, they may appear to be merely a religious response to bodily suffering. But there are scholars who want to move beyond the perception of ritual as epiphenomenal add-ons. McGuire prefers to speak of a mindful body for "then spiritual responses may be simultaneously part of the mindful-body responses to pain and illness. Thus, we can better understand the impact of religion on the body itself, not just on ideas about the body."⁴⁰

When the Mi'kmaq revitalized their traditions in the 1970s, ritual became a central means of not only culturally and mentally adopting traditional Mi'kmaq practices, but also of facilitating a bodily resurrection. There is more to the gatherings than just the pride in being Indian (Mi'kmaq) and in symbols of Indianness, that are often displayed as ethnic power markers vis-à-vis mainstream society. The ritual praxis includes agency of the body, still suffering from postcolonial stress and trauma, seeking to negotiate a way to make life more endurable. I will cite two examples of contem-

³⁹ Rappaport 1999:31.

⁴⁰ McGuire 1990:285.

porary cases from the Mi'kmaq reserves where persons found themselves in an identity crisis, including loss of agency in the body. This will permit a discussion of how the Mi'kmaq try to handle and overcome painful experiences in everyday life.

It is the autumn of 1992 and I'm living on the Canadian east coast, on Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia. Early in the morning, some of my Mi'kmaq friends from the Whycocomagh reserve (now Whycobah) pay me a visit at home, since we have planned to participate in the yearly celebration of the United Nations Day at the University College of Cape Breton, situated in the province capital of Sydney. Racism is on the day's agenda.

The first speaker is Donald Marshall Junior, son of the deceased Grand Chief Donald Marshall and mentioned above with regard to a prison sentence of eleven years for a murder he firmly denied having committed. The case was publicized all across the continent as a travesty of justice since, in hindsight, it is clear that racial prejudice was one precipitant of the wrongful verdict. It is obvious that Junior does not feel comfortable before a large audience, but he has decided to overcome this fear in order to speak of the traumatic effects from spending eleven years in prison.

The next speaker is an anxious, fourteen-year-old Mi'kmaq boy. This is a large audience to be facing and he can see almost no familiar faces from the reserve at all, only academics and other citizens. The boy begins to speak, but his voice is trembling and he mumbles something inaudible. That's when Rita Joe stands up, the famous Mi'kmaq poet. She steps onto the stage. Standing behind him, she whispers some words in his ear. The boy makes a new attempt. Yes, he has a great interest — hockey — and he has been so successful that he was recruited by a hockey team from a non-native neighborhood. (It goes without saying that being a talented hockey player in Canada is a source of prestige. Even on the reserves, people watch the NHL and children trade hockey cards.) The boy's skill had earned him a prominent place on the team, and he quickly advanced to play center forward and became a leading scorer in the league. When it was time for the finals, he and his

team traveled to the town of Antigonish. His parents accompanied the group, since Mi'kmaq families are always fearful about letting their children travel on their own outside the reserves.

The game was off to a good start for the visiting team. The Mi'kmaq boy scored a goal, although the other team had him "shadowed," i.e., a player had been assigned to guard him extra carefully. Another goal follows. The Antigonish team is getting more and more annoyed and since they are playing at home, the audience starts booing. The "shadow" tries to verbally insult the Mi'kmaq boy: "Go home, wagon-burner! Go home, Indian!" The referee gives him a warning, but he still continues. The Mi'kmaq boy now feels uncomfortable, and even the spectators harass him: "Go home, wagon-burner!" They have also become aware of the boy's parents and start harassing them. The referee loses control of the game, the situation on the ice heats up, there is chaos in the audience, someone phones the police and the boy and his parents are escorted back to the reserve.

Rita Joe keeps her arm around the boy's shoulders as he mumbles quietly: "I will never more play hockey." Then he leaves the stage.

The incident with the hockey game was not totally new to me. I had already read about it in the papers and heard about it from some of my Mi'kmaq friends. The story had also been reported to the Canadian authorities and was under investigation, but the process seemed to be moving very slowly. I was rather upset by what had happened; it was not the first time I had encountered verbal insults directed at my Mi'kmaq friends. Some of my non-native friends were as upset as I was, though some of them said: "Yes, this was bad behavior, but what did he expect?" Some greeted me with total silence and some only shrugged their shoulders. For me, this kind of reaction was the most difficult to face — there was not even an argument for or against, only a disengagement and indifference to what had been witnessed.

A week later, the game was no longer of interest to the media. All that was mentioned was an incident which occurred a week

after the tragic Antigonish game. A group of Mi'kmaq, dressed in army clothes, came into town, visited a lunch canteen, asked if this was the town where a certain game of hockey had been played, stayed for hours and struck terror in the hearts of the citizenry. Were the Mi'kmaq going to assault someone? Would they destroy property? But after a few hours, the men just walked out the door and disappeared. No violence, no threat transpired, only a silent manifestation that they were not going to put up with racist attacks on their people.

These men, dressed in camouflage clothing, were Mi'kmaq Warriors. Their organization was founded at the end of the 1980's and they had made it their mission to guard the land, the people and the laws.⁴¹ The warriors very quickly became idols for young Mi'kmaq and the warrior ideology offered salvation from a less dignified life, an opportunity to heal by means of a new, spiritual awakening. In the article, "The Value of a Warrior," published in *Micmac Maliseet Nations News*, April 1994, Nelson J. Augustine writes:

It is possible that a warrior society can play a pivotal role in finding a solution to the many problems experienced by Native communities. Substance abuse, family violence and suicides are just a small example of the turmoil that is facing our communities. All of these social problems are the result of the hopelessness and despair that arise out of a lack of cultural pride, traditional values, and Native spirituality. This hopelessness and despair must be subdued, and if possible, eradicated, in order to eliminate the chaos and confusion that plagues many of our communities today. Therefore, if a society were to be the guardians of sacred traditional values, they must obey and uphold the values they are sworn to protect.

The Mi'kmaq warrior is one such society, but their laws are concerned with protecting Mi'kmaq people and territory, and I must say they are doing a terrific job in this respect . . .

There is no halfway ground with traditional values; you cannot drink or do drugs half the time and claim to be traditional the other half. All Native traditional values have to be obeyed and respected. One such ancient traditional

⁴¹ *Micmac Maliseet Nation News*, March 1994, No. 3, p. 4; cf. Hornborg 2001:251.

value is to respect and honor the values of others. . . . That is what the Mi'kmaq Nation needs — true warriors who know what their real traditional values are and the difference between right and wrong, who are willing to suffer and sacrifice to protect their people and customs. . . . The role of traditional warriors is at home, right in the community itself, doing battle against the real enemies. Substance abuse, family violence and suicides.

Ritual as a Shared Domain for Embodying New Identities

Both Donald Marshall Junior and the fourteen-year-old Mi'kmaq boy — each in his own way — were subjected to severe losses. The boy was forced to curtail his life, to “amputate” a piece of his body, the piece that moved as a hockey player and gave him such pleasure and acknowledgement. The game of hockey, formerly a pleasure to his body, was now experienced as discomfort. In Junior's case, the loss was even more radical, since he was imprisoned, the most drastic way to lose agency. The struggle between colonialists and Mi'kmaq is no longer, as in days of old, a life and death battle. Today's victims do not lose their lives, but what they lose is confidence concerning the opportunities available to them in this life. They adopt the oppressor's image of the oppressed, which fits well with how their bodies have already learned to be and act in the world.⁴² The high incidence of suicide among the Mi'kmaq seems to reflect this loss of agency and broken confidence. One Mi'kmaq spokesperson, Murdena Marshall, former Assistant Professor of Mi'kmaq Studies at the University College of Cape Breton, wrote in 1991:

When an identity crisis is experienced by an individual, his spiritual, mental and physical well-being is bombarded with feelings of doubt, anxiety, confusion and *uselessness* [italics mine]. As a Native Person, he is not immune to these psychological illnesses and, as a result of our loss of identity, Mi'kmaq are more apt to experience psychological illness.⁴³

⁴² McGuire 1996:108; see also Cooley 1995.

⁴³ Inglis, Mannette, and Sulewski 1991:19.

When the Mi'kmaq today revive their older traditions, it is often articulated as a reaction against what they experience as suppression by dominant society against the Mi'kmaq people. The following letter to the *Micmac News*' editorial board tells us of the longing for a Mi'kmaq identity:

I understand that I am part Blood Micmac on my father's side of the family. I am into Pow Wows and Mountain Man here in Utah. I would like to go total Micmac Indian in dress. I know nothing about the Micmac Indian, the customs, dress, beadwork. I cannot find any book on the Micmac in Utah book stores. So if you could tell me where to get these books or information, it would be greatly appreciated.⁴⁴

But practice has been a more effective way of reworking identities than has reading newspapers or books. Rituals have been a decisive means, if not the most important, in creating a new image of what it means to be Mi'kmaq. They are more than social acts employed to negotiate a new identity within a hegemonic discourse; they are a means of letting the bodily embedded memories be reworked and of making the individual body correspond with the new self-esteem. In rituals, you don't symbolize being a Mi'kmaq, you become a Mi'kmaq. If you embody how to move proudly in the ritual, this may be observed by a detached bystander as a symbol of pride, but for the participant it becomes pride. To move your body in a proud manner is an experiential matter. Rituals provide a bodily reorientation for the participant and ritualization becomes a way of embodied learning. It works like redemptive "medicine."⁴⁵ For the participants, who in the case of Mi'kmaq carry suffering in the body, the rituals provide an opportunity to rework bodily embedded conditions of suppression into resurrection, and to manifest another way of being. As a social act, the ritual addresses yet another level by simultaneously affording the participant a social affirmation of the new Mi'kmaq identity.

⁴⁴ *Micmac News* 1992, No. 8.

⁴⁵ Salomonsen 2003:22; see also Bell 1997:81.

To Become a Mi'kmaq — The Role of Spirituality

In the 1970s, the Mi'kmaq became acquainted with a wave of panindian ceremonies that swept the continent and made them curious about their “Indian” ancestry. An example of one such panindian ceremony is the *pow wow*, a gathering with drumming, chanting and circle dances. There are talking circles, the Sacred Fire burns, and the sharing of meals. Historical sources tell us that the Mi'kmaq performed circle dances, but the *pow wow* has its origin in a modern setting, with Lakota tradition as an important source of inspiration. Some important objects in the gathering signify the “Indianness,” such as eagle feathers, buck skin clothes and the burning of sweet grass. The Membertou reserve in Sydney, Cape Breton, held a winter *pow wow* in February 1993, and the program, detailed below, followed a pattern typical for these gatherings:

Thursday, Feb. 11, 1993

— 6:00 P.M. Sacred Fire lit by George (Sonny) Laporte. Fire goes continuously for four days.

Friday, Feb. 12, 1993

— 2:00 P.M. Welcome by Melvin Paul, Grand Council Captain
 — Maupltu Wkwisk Drum Group — Host Drummers
 — Introduction of Pow-Wow Committee
 — Grand Entrance
 — Sunset: Retire Flag
 Meal (non-traditional)
 — Drumming, etc., continues

Saturday, Feb. 13, 1993

— Sunrise Ceremony — 7:00 A.M.
 — Sweat Lodge
 — Elders Gathering
 — Talking Circles
 — Youth Circles
 — Waltes Games⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Waltes is a kind of dice game that is still played by the Mi'kmaq. Today it is an entertaining, competitive game, but it has had a deeper, divinatory meaning

- Grand Entrance — 2:00 P.M.
- Pow-wow Continues

Sunday, February 14, 1993

- Sunrise Ceremony — 7:00 A.M.
- Sweat Lodge
- Elders Gathering
- Talking Circles
- Youth Circles
- Waltes Games
- Grand Entrance — 2:00 P.M.
- Sunset:
 - Retire Flag
 - Give away and Dance
 - Traditional Feast
 - Closure⁴⁷

Pow wows are popular events and provide an opportunity to meet relatives and friends from all over the province. It is strongly emphasized that these gatherings should be free from drugs and alcohol. This stipulation tells us something about the problems on the reserves.

Many Mi'kmaq in their forties and fifties told me of the problems associated with initiating new practices, actively reclaiming an "Indian" identity and participating in pow wows. They received the wrong kind of attention when they were wearing buck skin clothes and let their hair grow: "Wow, you look Native!" Comments like this had made them feel uncomfortable in their new bodily appearance. Today the younger generation is no longer so distanced from

in older Mi'kmaq tradition and is most probably of pre-Columbian origin. Men could use it to predict how a battle would end and women to give strength and power to their men when on a war expedition. It also happened that men lost everything they owned, even their wives, during a game of *waltes* (Wallis and Wallis 1955:200).

⁴⁷ I was given this information by the Apiknajt Esmut Pau Wau Committee 1993; see also Hornborg 2001.

the gatherings and the “new” Indian symbols, since they have been raised with pow wows and are acquainted with the setting.

Although there is a growing pride in being Mi’kmaq on the contemporary reserves, problems persist with regard to discovering and maintaining this new self-confidence. Because the reserve is a constrained place, life on these provides a restricted arena for inhabitants to act out their ambitions in life. In the 1990s, one of the most difficult times on the Mi’kmaq reserves was when a wave of suicides swept the younger generation. Big Cove, a small reserve in New Brunswick, was particularly seriously affected in 1992–93 when, within a brief time span, seven young men ended their lives. The reserve therefore organized a seven-day mourning ceremony to put an end to the wave of suicides and to prevent further tragedies. Many Mi’kmaq from other reserves participated in this gathering, among them several members of the Mi’kmaq Warrior Society. It is noteworthy that the invitation from the Big Cove Band Council implied both the social and spiritual dimensions of healing:

7-DAY MOURNING/ HEALING

Our Community has experienced the pain of the recent loss of seven young people. The week of March 8 to March 15 (inclusive) has been set aside for the people of Big Cove as a period of mourning and healing.

It is very unfortunate that our Micmac people have gone through these seven deaths, but it is only through prayer, hard work and determination that we will pull through. We, as a community, must stand firm and strong and see what we can do to avoid such tragedies.

The Chief and Council is in full support that something must be done to have a community response to these happenings.

The seven days activities will consist of the following:

- continuous drumming for these seven days (24 hrs./day for 7 days)
- feeling/talking circles
- information sessions to the public
- sunrise ceremonies each morning
- AA/Alateen/Alanon Meetings
- spiritual awareness via mission (church) and traditional ways
- youth sessions groups

- support of our native brothers and sisters
- the observance of no Alcohol and Drugs⁴⁸

Here, the Mi'kmaq have chosen to heal by practising their traditions. It is important for the mourners to seek consolation by meeting and talking about the tragic suicides, but the grief is also encapsulated deep in their bodies. A Mi'kmaq who becomes physically ill will, naturally, turn to modern Canadian hospital care to recover or to access the proper medication. However, when it comes to mental illness and psychological suffering, there is a great reluctance to use non-native therapy methods. Many prefer to solve the problems internally on the reserves and there is supportive counseling available at the band office or in healing circles. Many Mi'kmaq attribute illness to a loss of spirituality caused by years of colonial repression, which makes them less willing to settle for only a clinical treatment of the symptoms. From a Mi'kmaq perspective, spiritual factors provide more vital opportunities for healing. A Mi'kmaq newspaper published the following statement about Native Spirituality:

Native cultures in their traditional nature are authentic and dynamic, fostering distinctive and sophisticated development. A sense of identity, pride and self-esteem are rooted in establishing spiritual principles. . . . No distinction is made between spiritual and secular life. For the Natives, spirituality is a total way of life.⁴⁹

According to Bathgate, the Western notion of isolated individual identities is not easily applied to other societies, as in the case of the aboriginal traditional beliefs.⁵⁰ Bathgate discusses the spirituality concept which, for the believer, is neither a place nor an entity,

⁴⁸ Duplicated paper published by the Big Cove Band Council 1993.

⁴⁹ *Micmac Maliseet Nation News* 1992, No. 9, p. 30; cf. Hornborg 2001:232.

⁵⁰ Bathgate's study concerns the Australian aborigines. See also Becker 1994. The Fijians experience their body as a function of the community, not as a function of an individual "self."

but a “way of living in the world.”⁵¹ For the Australian aborigines as well as the Native Americans, a person’s being is embedded in land and relatives. The Mi’kmaq lawyer Patricia Doyle-Bedwell illustrates how she found herself caught between two worlds while attending law school, one grounded in the Mi’kmaq notion of community responsibilities and the other grounded in the Western notion of individualism:

I remember going to a wake of a young boy. I could not take time off to attend the funeral because of the time schedule of the law exams. Moreover, I had been advised that the law school would not accept my connection to this young person. So I felt extreme conflict over my responsibilities to both my education and to my community responsibilities. So I decided to attend the wake but not attend the funeral.

When I arrived at the wake, I realized the elders did not know exactly who I was. They observed that I was a good Mi’kmaq woman as I did the proper protocols at the wake. Because this behaviour had been modeled for me for many years, I did not know what to do but later, I had to think about what exactly I did that was proper . . . I did write my law exam on the day of the young boy’s funeral, full of emotion and conflict.⁵²

Mi’kmaq themselves stress the importance of spiritual rituals for maintaining consensual relationships and they fault the dominant society for having ignored the Mi’kmaq way of relating to people and land.⁵³ Thus, effective healing for the Mi’kmaq must situate a person in networks of people, connected to the land.⁵⁴ Healing is not only a “mind business”; it is a new orientation of the person’s being in the world. Since Western therapists do not address the spiritual dimension as important to a person’s well-being, the Mi’kmaq

⁵¹ Bathgate 2003:204.

⁵² Doyle-Bedwell 2002:96.

⁵³ Doyle-Bedwell 2002:68.

⁵⁴ Csordas 2004:5 about healing in Navajo contexts: “. . . healing is not just about health, but about emotion, identity, religion, self, suffering, modernity, and the colonial situation.”

say the possibilities for them to be healed with the help of modern secular therapy methods is limited.⁵⁵

The Mi'kmaq complaint about the dominant society's reluctance to acknowledge the importance of spirituality as a way of resurrection should be headed. From a Mi'kmaq perspective, spirituality involves body, mind and soul simultaneously, and rituals are considered to address and accommodate all three levels.⁵⁶ Westerners tend to reduce religion to a social epiphenomenon, in the Durkheimian sense, but the foremost purpose for the Mi'kmaq in rituals is not to reflect passively on or merely symbolize societal structures. Instead, it is to actively negotiate with and rework the individual's lived world.⁵⁷ Recent studies call attention to ritual as a creative process. McGuire says that, "when body metaphors and symbols are ritually realigned or reconnected, the sick person may experience a body/mind/self transformation culturally identified as wholeness or healing."⁵⁸ Jean and John Comaroff emphasize that ritual is "a fecund medium for making new meanings, new ways of knowing the world and its workings."⁵⁹ It is not the Mi'kmaq ambition to scientifically explain the importance of their doings. What the scholar in ritual studies might explain as practice theory could, for the

⁵⁵ Cf. the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, who degraded religion to the status of an obsession and drew parallels between obsessive actions and religious practices: "In view of theses similarities and analogies one might venture to regard obsessional neurosis as a pathological counterpart of the formation of a religion, and to describe that neurosis as an individual religiosity and religion as a universal obsessional neurosis" (1996:216).

⁵⁶ Boddy, examining possession (*zar*) among Hofriyati women in Northern Sudan, states: "For the *zar* in Hofriyat is a holistic phenomenon; it penetrates every facet of human existence. Consequently it defies analytic reduction to a single constituent dimension, psychological, medical, or social, with which members of Western cultures might feel more at home" (2002:405). See also McGuire 1996:101, and Crapanzano 1977:11.

⁵⁷ Bell 1997:80ff.; Comaroff and Comaroff 1993:xxiff.

⁵⁸ McGuire 1996:108.

⁵⁹ Comaroff and Comaroff 1993:xxi.

participant, be experienced and embodied as Native Spirituality, and we should perhaps examine this cultural perspective more thoroughly before we dismiss it as an emic⁶⁰ explanation. Since spirituality from a Mi'kmaq perspective is embodied in rituals, this emic concept should be included in our studies if we follow Csordas' suggestion that "embodied experience is the starting point for analyzing human participation in a cultural world."⁶¹ When the Mi'kmaq Lottie Marshall examines Native depression, she distinguishes spiritual illness from other forms of depression: "For this form of illness, there are no pills or professional help for the depressed Indian."⁶² Rituals thus become an important means of healing, since the performance situates the sufferers in a shared domain where they can act out similar experiences. In a poem, Rita Joe expresses her contentment with being in the company of like-minded people in a pow wow:

Today I am at a pow-wow
It is a gathering of Native people
We dance, sing, play drums, dress traditional
Nobody is shy, we are all Indian
Today I practice my tradition free.⁶³

⁶⁰ The discussion of emic and etic explanations has also been criticized today, since the scholar who has claimed to give the etic perspective, is also situated in a context and thus biased by cultural models.

⁶¹ Csordas 1993:135. See also McGuire (1996:103), who maintains: "When we abandon the limiting epistemology implicit in the oppositions of mind and body, nature and culture, and individual and society, we can explore deeper and more far-reaching ways by which religion can be linked with the health and healing of the body/mind/self."

⁶² Marshall 1991:70.

⁶³ Joe 1991b:65.

Somatic Modes of Attention — The Sweat Lodge as a Shared Domain

If we consider seriously the implication of phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the pre-objective act of perception tells us that perception begins in our body, situated in the world, and it is only afterwards, through reflective thinking, that we experience our body as an object. We thus approach the world with no subject-object distinction. When it comes to rituals where human bodies are situated in a shared domain, the notion of somatic modes of attention in cultural practice is of great interest. Csordas defines somatic modes of attention as "culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one's body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others."⁶⁴ A person's being in the world, therefore, includes sensing other bodies, rather than a preoccupation exclusively with one's own body. Although we are not always aware of how our bodies communicate, they are in constant interplay.⁶⁵ Csordas posits intuition as a kind of embodied knowledge. We may notice that a person's bodily expressions are not always congruent with what is being said, and intuitively (and probably rightly) we suspect this person of telling a lie. Dancing is another way of getting in touch with and becoming sensitive to other participants' bodies, since you follow their way of moving. The somatic mode of attention is of importance when the Mi'kmaq are dancing at the pow wow, since the shared movement is a way of sensing an embodied community. The sensory engagement in other bodies combines with the cultural setting, and thus ritual enhances the participants' capacity to not only reproduce the world but — conjointly with others and therefore

⁶⁴ Csordas 1993:138. Cf. Kovach (2002:952): "... I mean that all the focus of religious behavior is interiorized — directed away from the world outside our bodies and toward the phenomenality of the body itself."

⁶⁵ There are healers who by their bodily experiences learn about their clients. The healer might even feel the physical pain the spirits has caused the clients (Csordas 1993:140ff.).

more persuasively — to act upon it. Csordas implies the importance of ritual practice since it “exploits the pre-objective to produce new sacred objectifications, and exploits the habitus in order to transform the very dispositions of which it is constituted.”⁶⁶ Csordas’ statement provides a good starting point for the following examination of the ritual practice of a sweat lodge ceremony.

Visual perception could lead us to the epistemological fallacy of perceiving bodies as isolated objects, acting in the world. But there are Mi’kmaq rituals where visual perception is delusive and the individual has to relate to other participants through the use of other senses. Lacking the option of seeing other people, somatic modes of attention become more conscious to the participant. A custom common among contemporary Mi’kmaq is to ask a pipe-carrier to conduct “a sweat.” The sweat lodge tradition is mentioned already in 17th century historical sources. The information on how the sweat lodge was traditionally conducted is very scarce and on the reserves today the performance mainly follows the instructions of Lakota medicine man Black Elk. The lodge usually holds about eight to ten persons and is covered in blankets or carpets. To conduct a sweat requires lengthy preparations.⁶⁷ Participants have to abstain from alcohol or other drugs for several days before the ceremony. In this way, the body prepares for the ritual. In the morning a fire is lit that will burn throughout the day. Four logs are strategically placed, one in each cardinal direction and one in the centre. The stones follow the same pattern. After these formalized acts, stones and logs are heaped into a huge pile.

By evening, the stones are red-hot. The pipe-carrier announces that the sweat will be done the “traditional” way or, if more detailed information is desired, the Lakota way. (It is of no impor-

⁶⁶ Csordas 1990:39.

⁶⁷ For a more detailed examination of the sweat lodge see A.-C. Hornborg 2003.

tance to a Mi'kmaq who holds the copyright for the ritual; it is mostly the academics who typically put a lot of effort into examining "true origin.") The pipe-carrier then asks one of the participants to be the doorkeeper, standing outside the lodge in order to open and close the entrance. Before the participants enter the sweat lodge, they commonly "wash" themselves in the smoke of burnt sage as a means of spiritual purification. They all enter the lodge clockwise and take a seat around an empty pit in the ground. First, everyone smokes the pipe that circles the pit three times. Then it is time to place the heated stones in the pit. The doorkeeper closes the opening and has strict instructions to lift the blanket only when a participant or the pipe-carrier says: "All my relations." The inside of the lodge is now pitch dark; only the pink glow from the hot stones gives some illumination. The heat is nearly unbearable. The ritual leader starts to pray for those who are gathered and then the participants have the opportunity to offer their prayers. After half an hour the first sitting is over — "All my relations" — and the doorkeeper lifts the carpets. Some go outside the lodge to cool down, but the ritual place is not to be emptied of participants, so the pipe-carrier remains inside, close to the entrance.

During the next part of the sweat, there are opportunities to make private confessions. Everyone is free to speak from his or her heart and knows that when the ritual is over, nothing that was said inside the lodge is to be repeated. This is one of the main reasons why people ask for a sweat lodge ceremony — they are longing to talk openly about what is troubling them in life. It is also more comfortable to unburden one's mind in darkness, since the others are not watching; not being in the focus of the other's gazes, the speaker does not feel stared at and objectified. After a while it is time for another break, and then the sitting resumes with more prayers and more confessions. Finally, in an atmosphere dense with heat and darkness, the Mi'kmaq honor song is sung. "All my relations" — it is over and the participants may leave the lodge. Like newborns they enter the world, unburdened — for a while at least

— from the pain they have carried as reserve inhabitants within the dominant society.⁶⁸

After the ritual, many of the participants speak of their new sense of well-being. It is as if the physical pain from the heat and their inner pain have merged, and it releases tensions in the body. To experience an out-of-the-ordinary environment, and to approach other people in an out-of-the-ordinary way, opens up new modes of acting and reflecting upon the world. Since somatic attention “implies both sensory engagement and an object,”⁶⁹ a person must attend “with” as well as “to” the body. Though our body is always present, we are not aware of it in daily life. The sweat lodge offers the participants opportunities to explore the pre-objective, since they experience a different way of situating their bodies in the world and of relating to other bodies. Since there are no visual stimuli to distract the participant in the darkness, it becomes easier to pay full attention to the body. Actually, there is no option; the heat makes you truly aware of your body. In everyday life, we make use of the body unreflectively for moving, breathing and seeing, but in the sweat the participant is placed in the unfamiliar situation of having communication with his or her own body. The individual has to rely upon other senses to compensate when eyesight is gone, when breathing becomes difficult in such extreme heat and when s/he cannot rely on visual cues for relating to other people. The sensory engagement becomes more intense since the participant’s voice and emotions will be shared in the darkness without any interference from visual input, which tends to accentuate boundaries between bodies. The participants will now approach each other as subjects, not as visualized objects, and will

⁶⁸ Cf. Kovach (2002:953): “In the sacramental rite of baptism . . . the catechumen is submerged in water — eyes shut, sound muted, smell and taste occluded, virtually weightless — only to emerge from this brief moment of fully interiorized awareness as one spiritually reborn.”

⁶⁹ Csordas 1993:138.

become more aware of how their bodies are an important locus for experiencing the world and for being experienced-in-the-world. According to Jackson,

To recognize the embodiedness of our being-in-the-world is to discover a common ground where self and other are one, for by using one's body in the same way as others in the same environment one finds oneself informed by an understanding which may then be interpreted according to one's own custom or bent, yet which remains grounded in a field of practical activity and thereby remains consonant with the experience of those among whom one has lived.⁷⁰

The Mi'kmaq are embedded in a network of pain: drug-related problems, abuse, tragic loss of friends or relatives and, ultimately, the imprint of colonialism. Everyone in the sweat carries some pain in their body which they may work out together, as a shared embodied experience with like-minded friends. The anomalous environment in the sweat lodge thus invites the individual to "share somatic states,"⁷¹ a kind of "bodily empathy" with other participants. To be colonized meant not only being assimilated into different values and ideologies, but also adjustment to different bodily habits; difficult though it is, this change in values and ideas is not as invasive as a change of bodily habitus. Ritual practices provide opportunities for the individual to rework such destructive, embodied experiences and simultaneously have his or her new orientation in life affirmed and legitimized in a social context.⁷²

Affected by their disadvantaged position in a hegemonic context, it is by doing, by practice of ritual, that the Mi'kmaq most successfully build new self-esteem. The engagement in neotraditionalism has, for some Mi'kmaq, marked the beginning of a new life, without drugs or low self-esteem. Donald Marshall Junior suffered

⁷⁰ Jackson 1989:135.

⁷¹ Blacking 1977:10; see also McGuire 1996:113 and what she labels as "intersubjective experience." The shared experienced in the sweat lodge could be compared with what Spickard 1991 found in the Navajo Chant.

⁷² See also McGuire 1996:109ff.

immeasurably during 11 years in prison, and the difficult times did not end when he was set free.⁷³ He chose to turn back to the traditional way of healing and I was impressed by his bravery when speaking at the UN-day celebrations in Sydney. To be deprived of your freedom is the ultimate loss of agency and a lot of courage is required in order to regain the confidence required to assume an active role in the very society that was responsible for the undeserved loss of all those years. I do not know what happened with the young hockey player. Hopefully he will find new ways to be creative in his daily life that may compensate him for the loss of hockey, but there are not many options available on the reserves for full development of one's skills and talents.

Conclusion

By employing rituals on the reserves, the Mi'kmaq have found their way to strengthen self-esteem and articulate what it means to be a Mi'kmaq today. Every so often, critical voices have been raised against this new way of being Mi'kmaq, on the grounds that their rituals are not authentic since they are a mixture from different Native groups or may even be new inventions. Nevertheless, as in the case of symbols, this is a problem for the observer, not for the participant:

We must learn to distinguish between the symbols themselves and the *state of mind* they convey. The external vehicles may be "constructed" in our eyes; but the most important thing is whether these objects help the Mi'kmaq themselves to convey important experiences and meanings such as a common identity and self-esteem.⁷⁴

⁷³ This brings to mind a sequence in the Steven Spielberg movie "Schindler's list" (1993). When the war is over and the concentration camp prisoners are told they are free, there is no happiness in their eyes, just apathy. What freedom are they given? Most of them had lost their families, relatives and friends, their home and hope for the future. Where should they go; to what life would they return? Freedom is determined also by people's life stories, which may restrict a person's capacity to utilize their potential as free agents.

⁷⁴ A. Hornborg 1995:174, my translation.

The Mi'kmaq do not worry about the criticism, but think of it as just one more strategy adapted by non-natives to deprive the Mi'kmaq of their traditions. When one Mi'kmaq was confronted directly and asked about the history of a specific ritual, he answered frankly: "I'm Mi'kmaq, and what I am doing is my culture."

Not only do the Mi'kmaq inhabit restricted geographical spaces, the reserves; they also have limited opportunities for self-realization within the dominant society. To this, we must add the history of colonialism that has generated conditions of mental as well as bodily stress on the reserves. We should not underestimate the challenge of knowing the body as a locus for the political interplay of different habitus. Rita Joe writes:

Two ways I speak,
Both ways I say,
Your way is more powerful⁷⁵

It seems that the revitalization of traditional rituals has been the most effective way of developing a new embodiment and identity. The ritual opens up opportunities to explore a new habitus and to employ the body in a shared domain with like-minded peers so as to facilitate new ways of approaching the world. The capacity for the Mi'kmaq to rework the cultural body imposed on them by the dominant society opens the way for the weeding out of destructive patterns unconsciously or consciously embedded in their bodies. Patricia Doyle-Bedwell is well aware of the importance of being in the company of like-minded others for individual healing: "We need restoration and healing, not just for the individual, but a restoration of that Mi'kmaq person within the web of relationship that defines who s/he is."⁷⁶ Thus, the rituals provide redemptive opportunities for the mindful bodies that have been disempowered by hegemonic contexts, and simultaneously offer social affirmation of the new orientation for being in the world.

⁷⁵ Joe 1991a:32.

⁷⁶ Doyle-Bedwell 2002:237.

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BOOK REVIEWS

JOHN J. COLLINS, GREGORY E. STERLING, and RUTH A. CLEMENTS (eds.),
*Sapiential Perspectives: Wisdom Literature in Light of the Dead Sea
Scrolls: Proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium of the
Orion Center, 20–22 May, 2001*. (Studies on the Texts of the Desert
of Judah 51.) Leiden/Boston: Brill 2004, (210 p.) ISBN 90 04 13670 3.
Price

The discoveries of Qumran have furthered the scientific debate on the Hebrew Bible and the Period of the Second Temple in many ways. In particular, the debate on ancient Jewish apocalypticism was placed on a completely new basis by the Qumran texts.¹ The present book gives an insight into another research area; one which has been increasingly discussed in the last few years: the literature on wisdom in Qumran.² Several questions are discussed: first, specific aspects of the wisdom texts such as 4Q184 and 185, 4Q Sapiential Work A for instance; second, their relationship to the wisdom of the Hebrew Bible; and third, the general attitude of mind within Judaism in Hellenistic times. The anthology at hand addresses all three of these questions. It contains nine contributions that arose from a symposium at the Orion Center at Hebrew University, Jerusalem, in May 2001.

¹ See, for example, S. Beyerle, “Die Wiederentdeckung der Apokalyptik in den Schriften Altisraels und des Frühjudentums,” *Verkündigung und Forschung* 43 (1998) 34–59.

² See A. Lange, *Weisheit und Prädestination. Weisheitliche Urordnung und Prädestination in den Textfunden von Qumran* (STDJ 18), Leiden: Brill 1995, and for a good overview J.J. Collins, “Wisdom, Apocalypticism, and Generic Compatibility,” in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*, ed. L.G. Perdue, B.B. Scott, and W.J. Wiseman, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 1989, 165–85.

In his contribution ("Revealed Wisdom: From the Bible to Qumran," 1–11), Alexander Rofé focuses on a possible coherence between Qumran (1 QS 11:3–7) and the Hebrew Bible with regard to the idea that humanity receives wisdom through revelation. He shows that the concept of revealed wisdom appears already in Job 32:2, Deut 32:7, and Num 24:3–4, 15–16: The spirit of Yahwe already speaks through David, Balaam already knew the knowledge of Elyon, and Agur (Prov 30:1–4) knows that of the Holy Ones (p. 11).

Menahem Kister deals with the relationship between Ben Sira and qumranic wisdom ("Wisdom Literature and its Relation to Other Genres: From Ben Sira to Mysteries," 13–47). He reveals a process of eschatologizing, which before was primarily connected with apocalyptic texts. Both in apocalyptic literature and in the work entitled "Mysteries" (1Q27; 4Q299, 4Q300 and perhaps 4Q301) one can observe a reinterpretation of "revelation" as well as a very frequent use of wisdom terminology.

This last aspect constitutes the point of departure of John J. Collins' article ("The Eschatologizing of Wisdom in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 49–65). He analyzes the eschatology of 4QInstruction and thereby shows that this text has a world view that is very different from the wisdom of Proverbs or Ben Sira. Because there are similarities with the Epistle of Enoch, Collins comes to the conclusion that the texts are addressed to an elect group, not to Israel at large and certainly not to humanity at large in the manner of the older wisdom books (63). 4QInstruction insofar proves to be a "different line of development" beyond the traditions of Proverbs and Ben Sira. While the latter incorporated the Torah into the wisdom curriculum, the authors of 4QInstruction incorporated eschatology.

In his contribution, Torleif Elgvin addresses the question of what milieu the wisdom texts might have had ("Priestly Sages? The Milieus of Origin of 4QMysteries and 4QInstruction," 67–87). For this, he examines the origins of two Qumran writings which speak most explicitly about the revelation of divine mysteries. He develops an all-Israelite perspective concerning 4QMysteries and locates it closer to Daniel and Ben Sira, while placing 4QInstruction closer to the developing Enochic writings. He only locates 4QMysteries with the Temple as the milieu of origin while the pre-Maccabean Judea had slightly different circles of people producing texts of wisdom.

Lawrence H. Schiffman tackles the question whether the newly published Qumran wisdom literature is sectarian in character or not ("Halakhic

Elements in the Sapiential Texts from Qumran,” 89–100). He shows, on the basis of an analysis of 4QInstruction (4Q415–418a, 418c(?), 423), that the examples of halakhic excerpts that appear in the context of a sapiential composition do not conform to sectarian halakhic rulings, but generally conform with the law as defined in the later Pharisaic-rabbinic tradition (100).

The question of the social context of the originating circles of wisdom thinking is also addressed by Benjamin G. Wright III (“The Categories of rich and poor in the Qumran Sapiential Literature,” 101–123). He investigates whether the categories of rich and poor constitute an ideal value for 4QInstruction. He works out clear differences to Ben Sira with regard to the originating circles. Ben Sira’s students cannot be reckoned among the poor, they are being trained to serve in public and official administrative capacities. Ben Sira advises his students about behaviour in relation to the rich; the sage of 4QInstruction, in contrast, does not even mention a class of rich people at all.

Canan Werman, “What is the Book of Hagu?” 125–140) deals with the question of how to identify the Book of Hagu. In doing so, she also addresses the question of what kind of wisdom can be assumed in the Qumran Sapiential Literature. She comes to the conclusion that *Sefer ha-Hagu* highlights cultic law as well as pre-destined history. The book of Hagu is the product of a community that believed in predestined history and in God’s justice (140).

The topic of a possible historic milieu of the wisdom texts is also an issue for Årstein Justnes. His contribution (“4Q215A [Time of righteousness] in Context, 141–161: Appendix: 4Q215A — Text and Notes,” 162–170) deals with 4QTime of Righteousness (4Q215a), a text that since Michael Stone was read as a separate, sectarian composition until J.T. Milik read it together with 4Q215 as one text, the “Testament of Naph-tali.” On the basis of an analysis of the text’s biblical background (for example the Zion traditions) and a comparison between 4Q215a and the *Apocalypse of the Weeks* (and some other texts), Justnes comes to the conclusion that the text seems to draw upon several streams of tradition, especially apocalyptic, sapiential, and prophetic material (161). Because of the references to Enochic and Daniel streams of traditions, Justnes dates 4Q215a after these texts.

The anthology’s last contribution asks “Was there a common Ethic in

Second Temple Judaism" (171–194). Gregory E. Sterling answers this question by analysing diaspora ethical traditions and the Dead Sea scrolls. He can show that ethical instruction in Alexandria and the Diaspora was not similar to that in the land of Israel. Rather, there existed a common group of topoi that formed the basis for the ethical instruction in the diaspora (193).

The anthology offers a wealth of material, which is easily accessible through the indices (Modern Authors, Ancient Sources, 195–201). Of all the perspectives addressed by the volume, one shall here be remarked upon in particular. Both Kister and Collins take up again the old question of the relation between apocalypticism and wisdom. It was Gerhard von Rad who, in his *Old Testament Theology*, developed the theory that apocalyptic developed from wisdom rather than from prophecy. In the subsequent discussion of this issue it became clear that a distinct opposition of prophecy and wisdom in Hellenic times is highly unlikely.³ This anthology's contributions confirm this assumption and show that the texts rather depend on multiple traditions and feed from most different sources. Consequently, the question of the origins of apocalypticism needs to be addressed in a completely new way (Collins, 63). Also, one should perhaps start from the paradigm of a discourse containing different kinds of questions and problems, which were addressed from different perspectives alongside the different traditions. These traditions were adopted by different circles in Hellenistic and pre-Maccabean Judea (Elgvin, 86).

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³ See, for example, D. Michel, "Weisheit und Apokalyptik," in A.S. van der Woude (ed.), *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings* (BETL 106), Leuven: Peters 1993, 413–434.

MICHAEL DICKHARDT, VERA DOROFEEVA-LICHTMAN (eds.), *Creating and Representing Sacred Spaces*, *Göttinger Beiträge zur Asienforschung*, Vol. 2–3 (special double issue), Göttingen: Peust & Gutschmidt 2003, (294 pp.) ISSN 1618-310X, in subscription € 30,– single issue € 40,–.

In recent years space has become one of the central topics of Cultural Studies. Studies on the concepts of maps, cartography and landscapes, on the production of space, on environment and location have been published from multiple academic perspectives. Since the 1980s the focus of spatial studies has shifted from structuralist analysis towards investigations of cultural constructions of space. New analytic concepts like transgression, mapping, center/periphery, landscape, cartography etc. have become trans-disciplinary key terms in gender studies, ecocriticism, New Cultural History studies on cultural memory and also religious studies. In religious studies the focus of research has been on sacred geography, on iconographic representation of religious sites, on ritual production of holy places, on the making and negotiation of religious places, on the ritual marking, the power and politics of sacred places, and so on.

In the context of these publications the book edited by Dickhardt and Dorofeeva-Lichtman, based on the papers of an international workshop on “Creating and Representing Sacred Spaces” conducted from June 29th until July 2nd 2000 in the Department of East Asian Studies of the University of Göttingen, is a high quality contribution. It is special in that it brings together 14 articles from ten different disciplines which on the basis of very diverse source material and from several distinct perspectives examine the question of the construction of “sacred spaces” in different cultural settings and question the function of these constructions within the specific contexts. The theoretical introduction by Michael Dickhardt (Anthropolgy, Göttingen): “Creating and Representing Sacred Spaces as Processes of Symbolic Mediation: A Theoretical Introduction from a Cultural Anthropological Perspective” is followed by two long parts on “Sacred Spaces in Ritual Practices” (six articles, 109 pages) and “Sacred Spaces Described and Mapped” (four articles, 119 pages), and a short third part on “Sacred Transpositions” (one article, 25 pages). Some of the articles contain tables (Dorofeeva-Lichtmann), maps (Juhé-Beaulaton & Roussel, Borchers, Brandl, Gengnagel), graphics (Borchers, Brandl,

Khayutina, Dorofeeva-Lichtmann), pictures (Juhé-Beaulaton & Roussel, Khayutina, Gengnagel), photo illustrations (Juhé-Beaulaton & Roussel, Escher, Brandl) or glossaries (Rotermund, Khayutina, Dorofeeva-Lichtmann); each article is followed by a bibliography; a list of contributors is added at the end of the book.

The first part contains the following articles: Dominique Juhé-Beaulaton & Bernard Roussel (Africa Studies and Anthropology, Paris) "May Vodun Sacred Spaces be Considered as a Natural Patrimony?"; Anton Escher (Geography, Mainz/Germany), "The Sacred Place is the 'No-Place'. Theoretical Reflections Using the Marabout Sidi 'Abd ar-Rahman in Casablanca, Morocco, as an Example"; Dörte Borchers (Himalayan Languages Project, Leiden), "Sacred Spaces in Sunwar Houses"; Hartmut Rotermund (Japan Studies, Paris), "Sacred Space and its Characteristics in Japanese Religion and Folk Culture"; Rudolf M. Brandl (Musicology, Göttingen), "The Creation of Ritual Space in the Nuo Ritual in Guichi, Anhui Province"; Maria Khayutina (China Studies, Bochum/Germany), "The Sacred Space of an Aristocratic Clan in Zhou China (11th–3rd Centuries BC) under Transformation: An Attempt at Interpretation". The second part contains the articles: Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann (China Studies, Geography, Paris), "Text as a Device for Mapping a Sacred Space: A Case of the Wu Zang Shan Jing ('Five Treasures: The Itineraries of Mountains)"; Daniela Dueck (Classical Studies, Ramat Gan/Israel), "The Augustan Concept of 'An Empire Without Limits'"; Natalia Lozovsky (History, Indiana University, USA), "The Construction and Uses of Sacred Space in the Early Middle Ages: From the Salvation of the Soul to the Healing of the Body"; Jörg Gengnagel (Indian Studies, Heidelberg), "Mapping Sacred Spaces — Aspects of Cartography in 19th Century Banaras." The article in the third part is by Andrea Riemenschnitter (China Studies, Zürich/Switzerland), "Gedächtnisorte im Exil: Die anderen heiligen Räume der Nation."

With five articles on China and one article each on Japan, Nepal, and India, there is a regional emphasis on Asia. The articles are generally based upon individual investigations into materials from the respective original languages, on the grounds of which common concepts and theories pertaining to the currently relevant topic of "sacred spaces" are tested, criticized and further differentiated. The selection of articles is well balanced. Care was taken to ensure that the major perspectives and questions

in the domain of Cultural Studies involving this vast and many-faceted topic were appropriately dealt with. In this regard, we find fruitful and productive use of sources of all kinds for treating the problems presented: archaeological material (Khayutina), maps (Gengnagel), music (Brandl), (interior) architecture (Borchers), as well as various genres of written texts (Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, Dueck, Lozovsky, Riemenschnitter) and empirical field investigations (Juhé-Beaulaton & Roussel, Escher, Borchers, Brandl); sources which all demand their own particular methodology and thus each shed their own specific light onto the subject at hand. The integration of the different studies leads to a consolidation of theoretical concepts, the dense quality of which not only yields important new insights into the central question posed, but also into the methodology within the field of Cultural Studies in general.

On the one hand, the presupposition of a distinction between the “sacred” and the “profane” generally underlying the question at hand is repeatedly examined and in several studies explicitly called into question (Borchert, Rotermund). It is scrutinized in the articles from different vantage points, based on pertinent sources drawn from the specific disciplines. In this regard, the idea of the static permanency of sacred space is resolved from different points of view by pointing out the contextual properties involved in the construction of “sacred spaces” in different cultural contexts. On the one hand, the interplay, the mutual dependency, and also the connectivity between the sacred and the profane world are repeatedly corroborated in the respective studies, and sacred space is determined to be relational and no longer an independent space. On the other hand, in keeping with the question of different viewpoints on the creation of sacred space, it is clearly revealed in which contexts, for what motives, in which way and, especially, in which functional correlations sacred spaces are respectively created. For the sacred space, this elucidates its specific degrees of binding force or improvisation, the transitory, contextual and functional character in the temporally limited execution of ritual action in various cultural realms. The prevailing idea of two strictly defined and distinctive spheres is thus strongly questioned. The concept of a qualitatively defined space, therefore, is replaced by the idea of a multivalent and multifunctional space, which can in each special case be moved, newly reshaped and reconfigured respectively.

The problem of constructions of sacred spaces is in the second part of

the book further condensed by relating it to written texts. Sacred space is not only created in the context of ritual practice, but also on the basis of written texts. In this respect, also, the studies of the second part reveal in which ways the perception of space is related to the interpretation of textually transmitted traditions and where these, in their own light, take their origins. This also sheds a completely new light on the functional aspect of classical texts, formerly neglected due to the fixation upon the textual contents, be it for the representation of models of cosmological order (Dorofeeva-Lichtmann), for geographical extensions (Dueck), for religio-didactical purposes (Lozovsky), or for the practice of pilgrimage (Gengnagel).

Finally, in several cases (Juhé-Beaulaton & Roussel, Escher, Khayutina, Dueck, Gengnagel, Riemenschnitter) the question of the correlation between sacred space and society is posed. This approach, originating with Durkheim, taken up by the structuralists and strongly influencing Bourdieu, is dealt with in the studies with a special focus on the social acquisition of sacred space and the presuppositions for specific creations of space associated with it.

On the whole, the contributions make evident in which contexts sacred space can indeed be an analytically productive and helpful category, if one only abandons traditional views and conceptualizations concerning sacred space. Not only do these studies on sacred space provide help in a fresh understanding of the subject at hand in terms of its cultural diversity, they also, vice versa, establish sacred space as a new analytical category for investigating the contexts in which sacred space has hitherto been examined. By finding entirely new functional relationships and process-related correlations in cultural dynamics sacred space is now not only newly illuminated by these contexts but also in turn illuminates these contexts anew. The thesis, for example, that musical rhythm is determined by ritual topography (Brandl) will similarly open up new possible trains of thought, such as the consideration that city maps should really be seen as visualized texts (Gengnagel), and, conversely, that descriptions of paradise could be understood as cartographies of a concrete way to worldly salvation (Lozovsky), or that geographical travel guides for “religiously charged” localities were indeed formulations of political resistance (Riemenschnitter). In these primary source materials we see the revelation of new dimensions of reference in treating sacred space, yielding possibilities for stimulating the construction of new theories in this area, heretofore somewhat

static, on the basis of new insights, challenging and reviving former theories on the basis of new source materials. All in all, the academic quality of each individual contribution satisfies the reader and the specific collection of articles meets, and is able to enhance, a large variety of interests.

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MATHIAS FRENZ, *Gottes-Mutter-Göttin. Marienverehrung im Spannungsfeld religiöser Traditionen in Südindien* (Beiträge zur Südasiensforschung 195), Würzburg: Ergon 2004, (233 p.), ISBN 3-89913-343-9 (pbk.) € 42,-.

Compared to the cross-cultural significance which the veneration of the Christian Mother Mary enjoys in south India, the studies dealing with it have been small in number. Marian worship is generally treated as an element of catholic religiosity, whereas its appeal to Hindus has been rarely touched upon. A detailed study of the history and social role of south Indian Marian worship such as this book by Matthias Frenz is therefore most welcome. The book is important from the point of view of European religious pluralism as well; in recent studies on diaspora Hinduism, there is repeated mention of Tamil Hindus visiting Marian pilgrimage places, even after having established their own places of worship. Such phenomena have generally been classified by means of the ambiguous term “syncretism” (which has often failed to escape pejorative associations even when defined as a neutral term). It is one of the merits of Frenz’s study that he questions the analytical value of the term syncretism (13–30), criticizing its static nature, which makes it unable to account for ongoing dynamic processes, the mutuality of exchange, and the multileveled negotiations taking place in intercultural transfers. He prefers to work instead with the

term “contact zone” introduced by Mary L. Pratt and develops a grid of different layers of contact zones according to their radius of significance. Incorporating B.S. Cohn’s and McKim Marriott’s distinction between networks and centres, Frenz distinguishes: India as zone of trade and of Christian mission; southern India as a cultural field encompassing different religious backgrounds and networks, including a network of Marian sites which ranges from private altars and simple way-side shrines to pilgrimage places, and which also integrates non-catholic networks; Villiyaṇūr (“Notre Dame de Lourdes”) as a pilgrimage centre of regional importance established by French missionaries in the 19th century, in contrast to Vēḷāṅkaṇṇi as a pilgrimage centre of pan-Indian importance which was founded by the Portuguese in the 16th century and attracts large crowds of catholic and non-catholic pilgrims to its festivals at least since the early 18th century.

A further merit of Frenz’s study is that it deconstructs simplified generalization of “the” Christian mission (31–61). Even the Roman Catholic mission in India did not follow a uniform concept; the missionaries from different European countries and missionary societies pursued different spiritual and worldly goals, and fights over territory increased over the centuries due to the challenge of the Portuguese hegemony by the Vatican and the French mission. While the Portuguese decided missionary politics in south India in the 16th century, in the 19th century it was the French, both infusing their own (politically loaded) image of Mother Mary. The “folk” character of her worship, her royal associations (for the Portuguese) and her miraculous embodiments (the Lourdes Madonna) made it easy to establish relations with the Hindu environment and to spread her cult. The history of the church in Europe and the ecclesiastical rivalries exported to India have been, according to Frenz, as decisive for the formation of a specific south Indian cult of Marian worship as local disputes concerning individual places of worship, competition and mutual exchange processes with Hindu actors, and heterogeneous ideas and interests among the pilgrims who often exerted greater influence than the clergy.

The history of the pilgrimage centres Villiyaṇūr and Vēḷāṅkaṇṇi is comprehensively presented for the first time, and with great care for significant details (63–122).

In terms of the dynamics of exchange and negotiation with local Hinduism, following cap. 5 (123–187), is most interesting, and forms, perhaps, the

core chapter of the book. Both Vēlāṅkaṇṇi and Villiyaṇūr include (and Christianize) — increasingly since the early 20th century — important elements of the Hindu temple cult (pond, flag-post, beautiful festivals and cart processions, and most of all miraculous foundation myths stressing territory and the physical presence of the divine). However, Vēlāṅkaṇṇi is exceptional in receiving a high degree of sponsoring from Catholic and non-Catholic pilgrims of other regions from an early date. Frenz documents how much lay participation coincides with the social mechanisms of the redistributive system at the core of Hindu temple festivals, including the competition among different castes (Christian and Hindu) about privileged ritual positions signalling social prestige (like raising the festival flag). The cross-cultural exchange processes and transformations of traditions include creative initiatives by various cultural actors: the Catholic clergy, the lay participants from different religious backgrounds, and the local Hindu community. The latter has created its own new narratives in reaction to an increasing dominance of Catholics in Vēlāṅkaṇṇi since the 1960s, by inverting the Christian foundation myths in favour of their own goddess and claiming her superiority.

In his final remarks (189–194) Frenz concludes, based on interviews, that the common denominator of Mary's attraction for Catholics and non-Catholics is above all the cross-cultural natural symbol of an ideal "mother," e.g., the motherly characteristic of unconditional, tender love towards the child, whereas theological concepts like "Mother of God" (Christian) or "Mother Goddess" (Hindu) are rather immaterial for most pilgrims.

The book, based on historical, philological, and empirical data and methodology is well written, tightly structured with a clear analytical framework. It offers a fascinating abundance of meticulously researched details on the formation and social role of south Indian Marian worship, and the two pilgrimage centres in particular. It is worthwhile reading both for its systematic approach and its concrete data.

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JOHN C. REEVES, *Bible and Qur'ān: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*. (SBL Symposium Series 24.) Leiden/Boston: Brill 2004, (245 p.), ISBN 90-04-12726-7. Price

Exegetics has long been concerned with the relationship between the Biblical scriptures and the literature of the Ancient Near East and of the Greek-Roman world. However, a change has recently taken place towards the examination of how Biblical traditions live on in religious and cultural history.¹ This new strand of research builds on earlier works, but takes a different perspective. It no longer follows the paradigm of mere historical reception, which worked solely on the basis of the scriptures of the Hebrew and Christian Bible and focused on single motives and traditions in later texts. Instead, the questions go more into the underlying processes, especially into how Biblical traditions were received, functionalized and adapted in later times.²

The anthology at hand follows this new approach. It researches the reception of Biblical discourses and the interactions of Islamic, Biblical, and Jewish traditions in the 8th to 10th centuries CE. Its thematic focus is on the Bible's reception and reconfiguration within Islam and its world of discourse (VII). This approach is further developed in the first two book chapters and then applied to different case studies in the subsequent seven chapters. The introductory text by Reuven Firestone ("The Qur'ān and the Bible: Some modern studies of their relationship," 1–22) presents three history-of-scholarship approaches to determine the relation between the Qur'ān and the Bible. The pioneer of modern research was Abraham Geiger (1810–1874), who started out from the assumption that the Qur'ān was a human creation and not based on revelation (7) and that Biblical, ancient-Jewish, Christian, pre-Islamic, and Arabian traditions were used in this process (9). Geiger's work constitutes a new era of critical comparative study concerning the Biblical and Qur'ānic texts. However, he did not solve the problem of how to determine the relation between the two holy scriptures. After Theodor Nöldeke, Julius Wellhausen, and Julius

¹ See, e.g., M. Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003.

² On this, see H. Kippenberg and K. von Stuckrad, *Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft*, München: Beck 2003.

Morgenstern, it was Richard Bell (1876–1952) who answered this problem by construing a kind of history of decay: the more “primitive” Arab mind was not capable of understanding the complexity of what might be termed “high-cultural” renderings of Christianity (15). According to Firestone, this kind of “Eurocentrism”³ is often blended with a rigid historicism and pays too little attention to the literary context. Firestone starts off from this point. He refers to John Wansbrough (1928–2002), who highlighted the issue of intertextuality in some of his studies⁴ and thus opened up the view on the discourse structure itself. The approach of a “discourse of literary poetics” is further developed by Vernon K. Robbins and Gordon D. Newby (“A Prolegomenon to the Relation of the Qur’ān and the Bible,” 23–42). They propose to adopt Robert Alter’s, Paul Ricoeur’s, and others’ new exegetical approaches⁵ and apply them to the Qur’ān in order to determine the relationship between both literatures in a novel way (26f.). The idea is to place the Qur’ān within the same discourse environment as the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. For this, it is crucial to bring together literary poetics and social rhetorics, as has earlier been done by W. Brueggemann.⁶ Such social rhetorics in the Qur’ān are the miracle, the wisdom, prophetic, and apocalyptic discourse (32), while the qur’ānic discourse is essentially of an apocalyptic nature.

The subsequent seven contributions address special topics, but still share a common focus on prophetic discourse. Brian M. Hauglid can show, by example of the figure Abraham (“On the Early Life of Abraham: Biblical and Qur’ānic Intertextuality and the Anticipation of Muhammad,” 87–105), that a lively textual interchange existed between Jews, Christians, and Muslims during the 8th to 10th centuries CE. In this chapter it

³ On this term, see G. Ahn, “Eurozentrismen als Erkenntnisbarrieren in der Religionswissenschaft,” *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 5 (1997) 41–58.

⁴ J. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1977.

⁵ R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, New York: Basic Books 1985. P. Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, Philadelphia, PA: Fortress 1980. See also R. Alter and F. Kermode (eds.), *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1987.

⁶ W. Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 1997.

becomes clear already where the whole anthology's merits lie. Especially, some of the motifs of Jewish and Christian tradition can be retraced in the Qur'ānic representation of Abraham as well as in Islamic exegetical texts of Tafsir, Ta'rikh and Qisas al-anbiya (105). The authors know how to develop the initially sketched paradigm and also to bring in extra-Qur'ānic traditions. All this adds up to a carefully differentiated image, of which only a few aspects can be highlighted in this review.

John C. Reeves ("Some Explorations of the Intertwining of Bible und Qur'ān," 43–60) stresses the interrelations between ancient Muslim literature, the Qur'ān, and the Bible. He can show from three examples (among them Idris and Enoch) that these traditions must be taken as witnesses to "versions of Bible" (44). The same is true for such central topoi as the status of the Qur'ān with regard to the Torah, the importance of Abraham and Jesus as precursors of Muhammed and the topos of circumcision. In the same vein, Brannon M. Wheeler ("Israel and the Torah of Muhammad," 61–85), in his exegesis of Q 3:93, provides evidence of "an exegetical dialogue and polemic between Muslims and Jews" (perhaps the Jews of Medina) regarding the status of the Qur'ān with regard to the Torah, in which the latter which also counted as a revealed text. To show this, Wheeler takes into account the exegeses of Abu al-Qasim Mahmud b., Umar al-Zamakhshari, Ibn Kathir, and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi. These Muslim exegetes hold that the Qur'ān does not abrogate the Torah by implementing a new revelation (85), rather, it revives the original covenant revealed to Abraham, which was distorted and lost by the later Jews. Jane Dammen McAuliffe ("The Prediction and Prefiguration of Muhammad," 107–131) discusses the self-referentiality of the Qur'ān by taking into view the prophetic prototypes to Muhammad, namely Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Sidney H. Griffith ("The Gospel, the Qur'ān, and the Presentation of Jesus in al-Ya'qubi's Ta'rikh," 133–160) studies the impact of Jesus in the works of ninth-century Muslim historian Ahmad al-Ya'qubi, who offered a portrait of Jesus that was largely based on quotations from the four gospels or paraphrases and interpretations of these texts. Special attention should be given to Kathrin Kueny's chapter ("Abraham's Test; Islamic Male Circumcision As Anti/Ante-Covenantal Practice," 161–182), which shows that there are points of contact between the Qur'ān and Biblical traditions even in such a divergent topic as circumcision. Circumcision is not mentioned in the Qur'ān at all, and the

root *kh-t-n* does not appear there either. However, circumcision is mentioned in some non-qur'ānic Islamic sources and plays a prominent role in the Hadith. Most Hadith references do not relate circumcision to Abraham but to purity and to a concept known as *fitra*. The root *f-t-r* appears frequently in the Qur'ān. Tabari (d. 923) links Abraham's circumcision to the Qur'ān itself (Q 2:124), but this association differs from the Jewish idea of circumcision as a sign of the covenant between God and his people. The purity practices of the *fitra* serve as a kind of test that transforms Abraham into a pristine, ideal type. The chapter by Fred Astren ("Depaganizing Death: Aspects of Mourning in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Islam," 183–199), on the mourning practice in rabbinic Judaism and early Islam, concludes the anthology. A comprehensive bibliography (201–217) and indices (citations, scriptural/parascriptural characters, post-scriptural traditional commentators and tradents, modern authors, 219–245) make the anthology an important resource for the study of the relationship between the Bible and the Qur'ān. In this respect, the volume establishes a new basis for this field of research as it departs from the paradigm of intertextuality and also includes extra-qur'ānic sources in the scope of its analyses. These sources and the detailed presentation of early Muslim exegetes produce a multifaceted image of, e.g., circumcision. This image could be further refined if one took into account contemporary Jewish sources, as has been done by R. Schäfer for Judaism and the Christian traditions, taking the Shekinah as an example.⁷

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⁷ See P. Schäfer, *Mirror of His Beauty: Feminine Images of God from the Bible to early Kabbalah*, Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press 2002.

ERNST TROELTSCH, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe, im Auftrag der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften*, hrsg. von Friedrich Wilhelm Graf; Volker Drehsen; Gangolf Hübinger; Trutz Rendtorff. Berlin; New York 1998–.

KGA 4: Rezensionen und Kritiken 1901–1914. Hrsg. von Friedrich Wilhelm Graf in Zusammenarbeit mit Gabriele von Bassermann-Jordan. 2004, (xxiv, p. 948), ISBN 3–11–018095–2.

KGA 7: Protestantisches Christentum und Kirche in der Neuzeit 1906/1909/1922. Hrsg. von Volker Drehsen in Zusammenarbeit mit Christian Albrecht. 2004, (xvi, 646 p.), ISBN 3–11–016341–1.

Two new volumes in the critical edition of the works of Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923) have been published since my first review of this series in *NUMEN* 51 (2004) 229–31. There is no need to repeat or revise the general remarks made at that time: these editions are excellent, especially the introductory essays which place Troeltsch's works in his contemporary scientific context.

One of the new volumes (Vol. 4) is devoted to Troeltsch's reviews in the years he taught as professor of theology at Heidelberg University while in ongoing dialogue with Max Weber, with whom he was then sharing a house. In the last year covered in this volume, 1914, Troeltsch made a transition from the country to the capital Berlin and from the theological to the philosophical faculty.

Volume 4 includes 122 reviews on an enormous range of topics, not only on theological issues but also on the philosophy of the sciences, history, and anthropology. Troeltsch was so annoyed by one of the books he reviewed that he not only delivered his remarks on the "miserable" book, but also wrote a whole book himself, his *Soziallehren* (1912). Another review consists of 26 pages on the famous *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* by Reinhold Seeberg (pp. 87–111). Troeltsch also contributed a harsh review (1909, pp. 619–630) on a dissertation of one of Lamprecht's pupils (Günther 1907) to the Lamprecht Controversy, a lasting dispute among historians regarding an alternative concept of *Kulturwissenschaft*. Although the introduction (pp. 18 ff.) includes some precise but short remarks on this controversy, the reader is left incompletely oriented. Among the other most interesting reviews in this collection is the review

of Overbeck's *Christlichkeit* (1903), a pamphlet on theology mingling religion, personal piety and science, and a review of a book about Troeltsch himself by Julius Kaftan's brother, who twice opposed Troeltsch's election to the faculty of theology in Berlin.

Many of the reviews were originally published in theological journals, but also in the *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* (the German equivalent of the *Times Literary Supplement*) and in the influential *Historische Zeitschrift*. Troeltsch was widely recognized as a scholar — though a theologian — capable of original and expert treatment of sociological and cultural topics.

Volume 7 is a new edition of Troeltsch's famous contribution to the monumental encyclopedia *Kultur der Gegenwart*. Like his friend Max Weber he saw religion as the decisive force in the development of modernity. While Weber differentiated between the spirit (*Geist*) and the reality of capitalism, Troeltsch introduced the term Neoprotestantism (*Neuprotestantismus*) which described cultural developments since the Enlightenment. With this concept Troeltsch claimed Protestant roots for the political philosophy of the republic and democracy, for human rights, for the philosophy of the individual, etc. Unfortunately, the introduction to Volume 7 does not inform the reader of alternative theories about the roots of modernity, such as Jacob Burckhardt's *Renaissance* or those of French thinkers like Michelet, or Durkheim, who understood modernity as liberation from religious restrictions.

Troeltsch described the old Protestantism, i.e., Luther's Reformation, as essentially medieval, an unpopular stance at the time of the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation on October 31, 1917. The substantial protest it provoked receives excellent attention in this volume (pp. 16–32). There is, however, little attention paid to the enormous influence that Troeltsch's concept had on Anglo-Saxon historians of Protestantism. (Th. Kaufmann, in: H. Medick/Peer Schmidt [eds.], *Luther zwischen den Kulturen*, 2004, 455–481 offers further information on this subject.) Given his unconventional and controversial position, it is surprising that the editor of the ambitious work *Kultur der Gegenwart* chose Troeltsch to “define” Protestantism. On the other hand, Ehrhardt's piece on Catholicism and Wellhausen's on Judaism were also well outside the mainstream.

In short, these are excellent editions documenting and analysing a

revolutionary approach to religion in modernity. The next publication planned for this series is one of Troeltsch's central works, *Der Historismus und seine Probleme* (1922), to appear as Vol. 16/I–II.

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PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Books

- A Monk of the West, *Christianity and the Doctrine of Non-Dualism* — Hillsdale, NY, Sophia Perennis, 2004, 136 p., \$19.95, ISBN 0-900588-82-9 (pbk.).
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IAHR NEWS

The 19th Quinquennial Congress of the IAHR was successfully held in Tokyo, 24–30 March 2005. The editors wish to join the more than 1200 participants in thanking our Japanese colleagues for their excellent organisation of the Congress and their hard work to make it a truly memorable event.

During the Congress, the IAHR elected a new Executive Committee. Their names and addresses are:

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We congratulate the new officers on their election and wish them success in their work.

For more information on IAHR matters, please refer to the IAHR webpage (<http://www.iahr.dk/index.html>).

DISCLOSING THE EMPTY SECRET: TEXTUALITY AND EMBODIMENT IN THE CAKRASAMVARA TANTRA

DAVID B. GRAY

Summary

This article seeks to shed light on the textuality of Buddhist tantras and the esotericism that characterizes this genre of literature. It first examines the development of Buddhist models of textuality. Esoteric Buddhists developed a sophisticated textual theory that linked their scriptures to the gnosis of the Buddhas, which they claimed their practices could achieve most efficaciously. But the relation between text and practice is a problematical one. Indian Buddhists commentators on *Cakrasamvara Tantra* sought to resolve this problem through the trope of the “secret,” an empty signifier that points both to practice traditions that are to be concealed, and an undisclosable gnosis to which some practices lead, and which others presuppose. The article closes with a survey of the changing interpretations of the “secret” as the tradition itself changed, highlighting the central importance of sexuality in the history of this tradition.

Introduction

The Buddhist Tantras, a genre of literature very significant in the history of Asian religions, have received little serious study until recently. This is largely because these texts, unlike earlier Buddhist genres such as the *sūtras* and philosophical *śāstras* or commentaries, are highly resistant to interpretation, and thus present a serious hermeneutic challenge to the interested scholar, due their deliberate and often playful obscurantism, undertaken in the name of secrecy. Yet they play a very important role in the history of Buddhism, and represent an alternate mode of textuality, one which we are only now beginning to learn how to read. In this paper I will argue that it is essential that we come to terms with this material, in order to

deepen our understanding of what is truly an important and usually underestimated trend in Buddhism and Indian religions.

In the first portion of this paper, I will review the development of Indian Buddhist textual models, rooting the textuality of the Tantras in Buddhist embodiment theories, and particularly in relation to the *dhāraṇī*, textual “relics,” occulted remnants of the Buddha’s gnosis. In the second section, I will focus on the trope of secrecy, showing how its paradox of occultation and disclosure in a specific Tantric Buddhist tradition — that of the *Cakrasamvara Tantra* — forms a dialectic in which text and practice are fruitfully united. This implies a performative model in which the act of reading becomes a spiritual exercise designed to shift the reader’s frame of reference, ultimately resulting in an expanded sense of embodiment. Lastly, I will reflect upon the significance of this model for the study of the history of Buddhism, as well as the comparative study of mysticism.

Textuality and Embodiment in Indian Buddhism

From early on Buddhist conceptualizations about their texts were closely related to speculation concerning the multiple levels of a Buddha’s embodiment. Initially, Buddhists developed the concept of the two bodies of a Buddha, his physical “form body” (*rūpakāya*) and his “body of Dharma” (*dharmakāya*), which consisted of the records of his teachings or collection of his enlightened qualities.¹ While the former was, at his death, cremated and reduced to the relics which were enshrined throughout the Buddhist world, the latter lives on, so to speak, in the teachings of Buddhism.

By the time of Aśoka in the third century BCE, the worship of the relics, enshrined in *stūpas*, was a major aspect of Buddhist cult practice.² Relics of the Buddha were believed to be endowed with

¹ See Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, London: Routledge 1989, 171 for a summary of early pre-Mahāyāna views on this subject.

² On the Buddhist cult of relics see John Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* (Princeton:

life, and even infused with all of the good qualities of the living Buddha.³ Mahāyāna Buddhism developed an ambiguous perspective regarding what might be called the “relic cult,” which some Mahāyāna scriptures sought to supplant with what Gregory Schopen has called a “cult of the book.”⁴ The *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, a Mahāyāna Buddhist scripture, derives the sacrality of relics from the ultimate locus of sacrality, the Buddha’s awakening or gnosis of reality which the text terms the Transcendence of Wisdom, *prajñāpāramitā*, as follows:

Kauśika, should it happen that you, on the one hand, were given the world filled to the brim with relics of the Tathāgatas, or, on the other, were to be presented with the text of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, then selecting one of the two which would you take?

Shakra said: “. . . Lord, I would embrace the *Prajñāpāramitā*. Why? This is because of its fame as the illuminating guide of the Tathāgatas, and because it truly is, in a real sense, the body/relic (*śarīra*) of the Tathāgatas. Why is that? As the Lord stated: ‘The Lord Buddhas are those who have Dharma as their bodies (*dharmakāyāḥ*). Monks, do not think that this [physical] body is my true body. You will see me through the full realization of the body of Dharma.’ One should see that the Tathāgata’s body is that which manifests as the limit of reality, namely, the *Prajñāpāramitā*. It is not the case, Lord, that the Tathāgata’s relics are not esteemed by me. . . . Rather, the Tathāgata’s relics are worshipped insofar as they originate in the *Prajñāpāramitā*.”⁵

Princeton UP 2004) and also Gregory Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 1997.

³ See Schopen’s “Burial *Ad Sanctos* and the Physical Presence of the Buddha in Early Indian Buddhism,” reprinted in Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks*, 126.

⁴ See Gregory Schopen, “The Phrase ‘*sa prthvīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhaver*’ in the *Vajracchedikā*: Notes on the Cult of the Book in Mahāyāna,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 17 (1975) 147–81.

⁵ My translation from P.L. Vaidya’s *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, With Haribhadra’s Commentary Called Aloka* (Buddhist Sanskrit Texts no. 4), Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1960, 48; cf. Edward Conze, *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and its Verse Commentary*, 1973; repr. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publ. 1994, 116.

The text here plays upon the term “transcendence of wisdom,” which designates both the Buddha’s gnosis and also the text that supposedly manifests it. This gnosis is the true “body” of the Buddha, and it persists in its embodiment in the text of this scripture. This notion, that the text embodies the gnosis of the Buddha, came to occupy a central position in the textual theory of Tantric Buddhism.

This text also takes advantage of the polysemy of the Sanskrit term *śarīra*, which means “body” and also, for Buddhists, “relic,” the remnants of a holy person’s cremated body. In Indian discourse, as in our own, a text can metaphorically have or be a “body.” But in specifically Buddhist usage it can also be a relic. In this *sūtra* the text is claimed to be the basis of, and hence superior to, the relic cult. The *Lotus Sūtra* likewise claims that the site where it is taught or copied becomes sanctified thereby, and is equal in sacrality to that produced by the relic of a Buddha.⁶ The implicit equation between text and relic is made explicit in a later text. In an addendum to a copy of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the Go-Reizei emperor (r. 967–969 CE) noted that the *Lotus Sūtra* constitutes relics of the Dharma Body of the Buddha.⁷

The parallel that is being made here seems to be the following: just as relics are the traces or manifestations in the present world of the Buddha’s “Form Body,” texts such as the *Lotus Sūtra* manifest his “Dharma Body.” They are not the *dharmakāya* per se, for in Mahāyāna Buddhism the term *dharmakāya* was invested with cosmic significance as the “real body” or “reality body” in the sense of “the embodiment or assemblage of what there really is.”⁸ The text is a coded relic, a remnant of the Buddha’s teaching, that

⁶ See Schopen, “Notes on the Cult of the Book,” 164.

⁷ See Brian D. Ruppert, “Sin or Crime? Buddhism, Indebtedness, and the Construction of Social Relations in Early Medieval Japan,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 28.1–2 (2001) 39.

⁸ Paul Griffiths, *On Being Buddha: The Classical Doctrine of Buddhahood*, Albany: SUNY Press 1994, 149–50.

is a means for the achievement of the Buddha's gnosis, the realization that all of reality is the ultimate level of one's own "embodiment."

These developments coincided with a gradual shift in the narrative structure of Buddhist scriptures. In early Buddhism texts were composed and transmitted orally.⁹ Eventually the transition was made to written transmission, a transition that was apparently a traumatic one.¹⁰ Thence Mahāyāna Buddhists rapidly proceeded to the written composition of new scriptures. Nevertheless, for centuries Buddhists retained the pretense of orality, particularly via the opening *nidāna* verse, which in Roland Barthes' terminology could be termed a coded sign of narrativity.¹¹ This verse, which begins

⁹ Regarding the oral/aural nature of the early Pali *suttas* see Steven Collins, "Notes on Some Oral Aspects of Pali Literature," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 35 (1992) 121–35. The legitimizing uses of orality is emphasized by Donald Lopez in his "Authority and Orality in the Mahāyāna," *Numen* 42 (1995) 21–47.

¹⁰ Early Sri Lankan records, such as the *Mahāvamsa* (33.100–1), indicate that the Buddhist canon, which had been transmitted orally for centuries, was put down into writing between 35–32 BCE, out of fear that they would be lost due to the condition of turmoil, warfare and famine that afflicted the island at this point in time. See Étienne Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism*, Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, Institut Orientaliste 1988, 364–71.

¹¹ Roland Barthes, "Structural Analysis of Narratives," in his *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, New York: Hill and Wang 1977, 114–15. Barthes defines these as "the set of operators which reintegrate functions and actions in the narrative communication articulated on its donor and its addressee" (114), and he describes them as follows: "we are familiar in oral literatures with certain codes of recitation (metrical formulae, conventional presentation protocols), and we know that here the 'author' is not the person who invents the finest stories but the person who best masters the code which is practiced equally by his listeners: in such literatures the narrational level is so clearly defined, its rules so binding, that it is difficult to conceive of a 'tale' devoid of the coded signs of the narrative ('once upon a time', etc.);" (114–15) This seems applicable to Buddhist codes of recitation, such as the *nidāna* verse. Clearly, the authors of Buddhist *sūtras* were obliged to follow the expected rules of protocol; it would have been hardly possible to compose a *sūtra* without the opening *nidāna* verse, and if such was composed it would have almost certainly been rejected as illegitimate. However,

“Thus have I heard: At one time the Blessed Lord . . .,”¹² serves to locate the narrative within a specific time and place, authorizing it as *buddhavacana*, genuine speech of the Buddha. Here the real or perceived *historicity* of the text is its primary mode of legitimation, and since this legitimacy is based upon its pretension of accurately representing an actual pedagogical encounter, the narrative structure of these texts reflects this imperative.

Mahāyāna Buddhists increasingly came to disembody their teachings from this spatial and temporal context, maintaining instead a stance of ultimacy by insisting on their timeless non-locality.¹³ The teachings, as aural manifestations of the Buddha’s *gnosis*, are eternal and omnipresent, provided that one has the purity and strength of mind to apprehend them. Some Mahāyāna scriptures describe actual meditative concentrations enabling one to ascend to the pure lands of the Buddhas to receive teachings from them.¹⁴ For the

unlike signs such as “once upon a time,” the *nidāna* verse is far more political in that it implies a legitimation claim. That is, it is “coded” in a more politically charged fashion.

¹² That is, *evaṃ mayā śrutam ekasmin samaye bhagavān*. On the significance of this text see John Brough, “Thus have I heard . . .,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 13.2 (1950) 416–26.

¹³ For an excellent overview of Mahāyāna textual legitimation strategies see David McMahan, “Orality, Writing, and Authority in South Asian Buddhism: Visionary Literature and the Struggle for Legitimacy in the Mahāyāna,” *History of Religions* 37.3 (1998) 249–74.

¹⁴ There were several Mahāyāna texts composed during the first half of the first millennium that teach meditative concentrations that supposedly enable the successful practitioner to enter states of deep concentration (*samādhi*) in which he or she can travel to “Buddhalands” (*buddhakṣetra*) and meet with the Buddhas who dwell there. These include the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra*, a second century Indian text, and also the **Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra*, a fifth century text that was likely composed in Central Asia. See Paul Harrison, “Buddhānusmṛti in the Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 9 (1978) 35–57, and Julian Pas, *Visions of Sukhāvātī: Shan-Tao’s Commentary on the Kuan Wu-Liang-Shou-Fo Ching*. Albany: SUNY Press 1995.

Mahāyāna adept, the awakened worlds of the Buddhas are always accessible, provided that one has mastered the meditative techniques that afford access to them. Teachings then need not solely descend through time from the historical Buddha via lineages that are fragile and easily disrupted, but are accessible via revelation as well.

Esoteric Buddhists developed this into a highly sophisticated textual theory, which was based upon the notion of the “Reality Body” of the Buddha as a timeless and non-localizable matrix, which is thus realizable, potentially at least, in an infinite number of ways. For esoteric Buddhists, the universe is a text; and the text is a microcosm of a universe, even when the text is as short as a single syllable, such as *a* or *hūṃ*.¹⁵ Hence the complete gnosis of the Buddha, the direct realization of the nature of reality, is *always* accessible provided that one knows *how* to perceive it. This methodology is what esoteric Buddhist traditions claim to be able to provide; *praxical* efficacy rather than historical accuracy becomes the basis for their authority, and, ultimately, the body becomes their text.

This expanded sense of textuality obviates the need for the text to be associated with a specific moment in history. While early Buddhist texts sought legitimacy through connection with the Buddha’s Manifestation Body or historical embodiment, esoteric Buddhists

¹⁵ A classic eighth century statement of these ideas is contained in Buddhaguhya’s commentary on the *Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhi Tantra*; see Stephen Hodge, *The Mahā-Vairocana-Abhisambodhi Tantra with Buddhaguhya’s Commentary*, London: RoutledgeCurzon 2003, 172–73, 326–27. See also Kūkai’s essay *Unjigi*, “The Meanings of the Syllable *Hūṃ*,” translated in Yoshito Hakeda, *Kūkai: Major Works*, New York: Columbia UP 1972, 246–62. Although Kūkai was writing in ninth-century Japan, he received lineage oral instructions on Indian Tantras, and his work, while certainly influenced by East Asia systems of thought, maintains considerable fidelity to the Indian Tantric Buddhist traditions that inspired it. For a detailed study of Kūkai’s life and work see Ryūichi Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse*, New York: Columbia UP 1999.

felt increasingly less need to *place* their texts in historically recognizable locales. Some early esoteric works, such as the seventh century *Sarvatathāgata-Tattvasaṃgraha Sūtra*, maintain the paradigm of the *nidāna* opening verse, but locate the text in transmundane locations such as Akaniṣṭha, the highest heaven in Indian Buddhist cosmology.¹⁶ Such loci fit well with the claim that these texts derive from direct revelation of the ultimate.¹⁷

Later Buddhist Tantras would continue this trend. Texts such as the *Guhyasamāja* and *Hevajra* tantras, which were notable for their erotic elements, contain a markedly erotic (and historically unlocatable) opening verse.¹⁸ This trend reached its culmination in the *Cakrasamvara* and related *Yoginī Tantras*, which jettisoned the opening verse entirely.¹⁹ The *Cakrasamvara Tantra* begins instead

¹⁶ For the text of this *sūtra*'s *nidāna* opening text see Isshi Yamada's *Sarvatathāgata-tattva-saṃgraha: A Critical Edition Based on a Sanskrit Manuscript and Chinese and Tibetan Translations*, Delhi: Jayyed Press 1981, 3–4. For the dating of this text see Yukei Matsunaga, "A History of Tantric Buddhism in India with Reference to Chinese Translations," in *Buddhist Thought and Asian Civilization: Essays in Honor of Herbert V. Guenther*, ed. Leslie S. Kawamura and Keith Scott, Emeryville, CA: Dharma Publishing 1977, 177–78.

¹⁷ Kūkai saw this scripture as originating in the "preaching of the Dharmakāya Buddha" (*hosshin seppō*), which is the ongoing and non-localizable basis for the revelation of *buddhavacana*. See Hakeda, *Kūkai*, 154. Similar claims were made by Indian commentators for scriptures such as the *Cakrasamvara Tantra*, which will be discussed below.

¹⁸ This opening verse reads as follows: "Thus have I heard: at one time the Blessed Lord was residing in the vulvae of the Adamantine Ladies, the essence of the Body, Speech and Mind of all Tathāgatas" (*evaṃ mayā śrutam ekasmin samaye bhagavān sarvatathāgata-kāyavākcittahr̥daya-vajrayoṣidbhageṣu vijahāra*). See Yukei Matsunaga, *The Guhyasamāja Tantra*, Osaka: Toho Shuppan 1978, 4, and also David Snellgrove, *The Hevajra Tantra: A Critical Study*, London: Oxford UP 1959, vol. 2, 2. Matsunaga dates the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* to the mid- to late-eighth century (*op. cit.*, xxvi). Snellgrove dates the *Hevajra* to the late eighth century (*op. cit.*, vol. 1, 14).

¹⁹ The *Yoginītantras* are a genre of Buddhist text that exhibit significant influence from Śaiva Hindu traditions, and which emphasize female deities, and transgressive practices involving, among other things, the consumptions of substances

with the laconic *atha*, “and then,” which the commentatorial tradition takes as a reference to the ongoing and never-ending process of revelation of which this text is a prime manifestation. According to Bhavyakīrti, a tenth-century²⁰ Indian Buddhist commentator:

I, Bhavyakīrti, hold that since the primal buddhas know no cessation, this teaching formulation has a beginningless continuum, existing even before Śākyamuni, as has been well stated by tens of millions of buddhas and heroes. Thus, when the *Prajñāpāramitā* and so forth wane due to the power of Time, the burning eon and so forth, the Lord Śākyamuni teaches them again. The *Śrī Cakrasamvara* is not like that, for it exists without interruption in inexpressible Buddhahelds, and it is experienced through meditative states, etc.

and engagement in sexual practices that would ordinarily be deemed polluting in early medieval India society. They first appear during the late seventh to early eighth century (with the composition of the *Sarvabuddhasamayogaḍākinijālasamvara Tantra*), and the *Cakrasamvara Tantra* (CST) was probably composed by the late eighth century, as I have argued in my forthcoming translation and study of the CST. See section 1.2 of my *The Discourse of Śrī Heruka: A Study and Annotated Translation of the Cakrasamvara Tantra*, New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies, forthcoming. For an overview of the Yoginitantras and the milieu in which they were composed see Ronald Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement*, New York: Columbia UP 2002.

²⁰ Bhavyakīrti, according to the Tibetan exegete Tāranātha, was the sixth Tantric preceptor of Vikramaśīla, founded during the late eighth century by the Pāla king Dharmapāla. If this lineage list is accurate, this would place him in this position circa the early tenth century. See Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya, *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India*, repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass 1990, 18–19, 325–29. I consider evidence such as this to be an important source for the construction of the history of Indian Tantric Buddhism. While it is of course possible that Tāranātha's list is erroneous (his *History* does in fact contain a number of errors), I see no reason to assume that it is from the outset, unless of course there is additional evidence that contradicts this. In fact, as Templeman has argued, there is good reason to believe that his works maintains greater fidelity to earlier Indian sources than did many later Tibetan historical works; moreover he also critically evaluated the Indian and Tibetan materials at his disposal. See David Templeman, “Taranatha the Historian,” *Tibet Journal* 6.2 (1981) 41–46. Here there is good reason to provisionally accept it as evidence, as elements of Tāranātha's account are confirmed by other sources of information. See my discussion of this in section 1.3 of my forthcoming study.

by the heroes and heroines such as Īśvarī. This is the significance of text such as “and then.”²¹

Nor was it necessary to maintain the conversational narrative structure of the earlier *sūtras*. The *Cakrasamvara Tantra* contains traces of it, but here the conversation is not between the Buddha and his male disciples, but between Śrī Heruka and the goddess Vajravārāhī, which betrays Hindu influence, likely from Śaiva or Śākta scriptures.

The text as relic served as an increasingly important Buddhist textual model during the mid first millennium of the Common Era. The Tibetan scholar mKhas-grub, noted in his *Exposition on Tantric Doxography*, composed during the early fifteenth century, that the Pandits of India report that there are three types of “relic” that can be placed in a *stūpa*. These are, in descending order of importance, 1) “relics of the Reality Body (*dharmakāya*),” 2) “relics of His physical body,” and 3) “relics of His garb.” mKhas-grub further specifies that Reality Body relics are the texts of the *dhāraṇī*,²² which are cryptic and often unintelligible textual pas-

²¹ Bhavyakīrti, *Śricakrasamvarapañjikā-śūramanojñā*. To. 1405, D rgyud ‘grel vol. ma, fols. 2b, 3a.

²² See Ferdinand Lessing, and Alex Wayman, *mKhas grub rje’s Fundamentals of the Buddhist Tantras, rgyud sde spyiḥi rnam par gźag pa rgyas par brjod*, The Hague: Mouton 1968, 106–7, and also the discussion in Gregory Schopen, “The Bodhigarbhāḥkālākṣa and Vimaloṣṇīṣa Dhāraṇīs in Indian Inscriptions,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasien* 24 (1985) 125. My translations of the above terms differ somewhat from Lessing’s and Wayman’s; I use the capitalized *His* to represent the honorific use of the Tibetan *sku*. See also Cristina Scherrer-Schaub, “Some Dhāraṇī Written on Paper Functioning as Dharmakāya Relics: A Tentative Approach to PT 350,” in *Tibetan Studies*, ed. Per Kvaerne, Oslo: Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture 1994, vol. 2, 711–27, and also Yael Bendor, “Tibetan Relic Classification,” in Kvaerne, *Tibetan Studies*, vol. 1, 16–30. As Bendor points out (17), most later Tibetan scholars argue for a fourfold relic classification, one which subdivides the “physical relics” into two types, actual bodily remains such as bones, and the “mustard-seed-like relics” that are commonly believed to emerge from the former type.

sages to which were attributed mnemonic or magical powers when correctly recited.²³ His report reflects what was clearly a popular late Indian Buddhist practice, well attested in the archeological record, of ensconcing Buddhist scriptures in *stūpas* in place of actual relics.²⁴

The identification of *dhāraṇī* texts, in both theory and practice, as relics of the Buddha's Reality Body had a crucial impact on the development of Esoteric Buddhist textual theory and practice. There is in fact a historical connection between the earlier *dhāraṇī* texts and the later Buddhist Tantras. The earliest textual precursors of the Tantras are *dhāraṇī*-collections, which appear with increasing frequency in Chinese translation during the sixth and seventh centuries.²⁵ The *Cakrasamvara Tantra* was ritually treated as if it were a *dhāraṇī*-*dharmakāya* relic. It was viewed as such by the Newāri scribe who copied the oldest palm-leaf manuscript in the twelfth or thirteenth century,²⁶ and also by Buddhists in Northwestern China

²³ On this see Jens Braarvig, "Dhāraṇī and Pratibhāna: Memory and Eloquence of the Bodhisattvas," in *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 8.1 (1985) 17–29.

²⁴ On this phenomenon see Schopen, "The Bodhigarbhālaṅkāralakṣa and Vimaloṣṇīṣa Dhāraṇīs."

²⁵ See Matsunaga, "A History of Tantric Buddhism" for a discussion of the importance of *dhāraṇī* collections in the early history of esoteric Buddhism; see also Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra*, 159–76, 237–71. These, in turn, were preceded by the *rakṣā* or protective literature of early Buddhism, a genre that, as Peter Skilling has shown, is pan-Buddhist, manifesting in all of the major schools of Buddhism. See his "The Rakṣā Literature of the Śrāvakayāna," *Journal of the Pāli Text Society* 16 (1992) 109–182.

²⁶ The last folio of the ms. is inscribed with the *pratītyasamutpādagāthā*, the "Stanza on Interdependent Origination," which occurs in the ms. as *ye dharmā hetuprabhavā hetuṃ teṣāṃ tathāgato hy avadat teṣāṃ ca yo nirodha evaṃvādī mahāśramaṇaḥ* (Śrīherukābhīdhāna, Oriental Institute in Vadodara ms. #13290, fol. 38a). This stanza was commonly used to consecrate *stūpas* during the early medieval period, often in conjunction with *dhāraṇī*. See Daniel Boucher, "The *Pratītyasamutpādagāthā* and Its Role in the Medieval Cult of the Relics," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 14.1 (1991) 1–27. Walter

around the same time period, who interred a copy of the text as a *dhāraṇī* “Reality Body” relic in a *stūpa*.²⁷

Dhāraṇī texts have a radically different narrative structure from the *sūtra* genre. The *dhāraṇī* themselves are not narrative at all,²⁸ although many *dhāraṇī* texts present a *nidāna* opening scenario in an attempt to legitimate the text as a product of the Buddha’s teaching activity. Given their cryptic brevity, *dhāraṇī* texts were not only *practically* more suitable for such ritual uses such as *stūpa* consecration, but they also sit in a relationship to larger texts as does the relic to the body from which it derives. *Dhāraṇī* are often located at the end of much larger *sūtras*, and are said to embody

Liebenthal has studied the inscribed bricks used in the construction of *stūpas* in the Nan-chao kingdom (presently Yunnan in Southwestern China) between c. 800–1100 CE. These bricks were commonly inscribed both with *dhāraṇī* and the *pratītyasamutpādagāthā*. Liebenthal wrote that “The bricks are found on the inside of the walls of pagodas. They cannot be seen from the outside, becoming visible only if the building is in decay and parts of it are tumbling down. They were used instead of a relic (she-li, Sanskrit śarīra) or as a *spiritual relic*” (Walter Liebenthal, “Sanskrit Inscriptions from Yunnan I,” *Monumenta Serica* 12 [1947] 2; emphasis in original).

²⁷ Li Fanwen reports that a text entitled the “*Sutra of Samvara*” was discovered within a Xixia-era *stūpa*, evidently interred as *dhāraṇī-dharmakāya* relic. While I have not been able to study this text, it is most likely either the CST itself or some other text in the Cakrasamvara tradition; it was discovered in conjunction with several other texts and images from the Cakrasamvara tradition. See his “The Influence of Tibetan Buddhism on Xixia” in *Tibetan Studies*, ed. Ernst Steinkellner (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 1997, vol. 2, 564).

²⁸ *Dhāraṇī*, while often containing recognizable words, do not exhibit normal semantic structure, but deploy words and symbols as a “spell” or magical utterance that is expected to have a direct impact on reality when “repeated” by a person with the appropriate training. As such, they do exhibit structural features of a poetic sort, such as repetition, alliteration, etc. For an in-depth discussion of the structure of *mantra* (much of which applies to the closely related Buddhist *dhāraṇī*) see Robert A. Yelle, *Explaining Mantras: Ritual, Rhetoric and the Dream of a Natural Language in Hindu Tantra*, New York: Routledge 2003.

the significance of the text, which may often be hundreds of times larger than the *dhāraṇī* itself.²⁹ They are comparable to the bits of inscrutable charred remains that are present at the conclusion of a cremation; they are the secret essence of a much larger body.

The transition from *sūtra* to *dhāraṇī* textual models was a gradual one. Some of the earlier esoteric Buddhist scriptures such as the *Sarvatathāgata Tattvasaṃgraha Sūtra* followed the still prestigious *sūtra* model. The later Yoginī Tantras best exemplify the new Buddhist genre, of which the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra* is a paradigmatic example. A relatively short text of only seven hundred Sanskrit verses, it is often called the *Laghusaṃvara*, or “Saṃvara Light,” due to the widespread belief that it is a cryptic condensation of the much larger one hundred thousand verse *Khasama Tantra*, a mythical text which probably never existed. Like the *dhāraṇī*, it is believed to be an encrypted text that secretly encodes the essence of a much larger work. And despite its “light” designation, the *Cakrasaṃvara* and related Tantras are certainly not light reading; they tend to be dense and obtuse. They employ esoteric, symbolic terminology to allude to secret yogic and ritual practices. This, when combined with the texts’ brevity, yields an overall effect of considerable obscurity.

For this reason predominantly, the *Tantras* have been largely neglected as an object of scholarly inquiry, despite their great importance in the history of Buddhism. This neglect is primarily the result of an inability to *read* the texts, due to a lack of understanding of their inner logic, which is radically different from that of earlier genres of Buddhist literature. The *sūtras* seek to present a true discourse, a *dharmaparyāya*, and this narrative style, in later Indian Buddhism, is most consonant with the view held by some

²⁹ See, for example, the *dhāraṇī* in the *Sadharmapuṇḍarika-sūtra* and the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, in, respectively, Leon Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, New York: Columbia UP 1976, 320–26, and Edward Conze, *The Large Sutra On Perfect Wisdom*, 1975; repr. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass 1990, 160–162.

Buddhists that ultimate reality is amenable to analysis via reason. The *Tantras*, however, assume a narrative style that undermines this assumption, and this is based on the conviction that ultimate reality truly is inconceivable, *acintya*, and is hence not amenable to analysis, and can only be approached via a direct yogic realization that transcends discursive thought.³⁰ Such direct realization is dependent upon the practice of a spiritual discipline, one that necessarily involves a practice of reading the texts. The assumption that the act of reading is a spiritual discipline underlies esoteric Buddhist textuality, which we will need to understand in order to appreciate these texts.

*Disclosing the Empty Secret: Textual Practice in the
Cakrasamvara Tantra*

The new narrative strategy adopted by the Buddhist Tantras reflects different presuppositions concerning the *use* and *purpose* of

³⁰ The Indian CST commentators were influenced by the intellectual trends at work in the Mahāyāna Buddhist community, and specifically seem to have advocated a form of Yogācāra Buddhism influenced by Dharmakīrti's epistemology. On this general trend see Ronald Davidson, "Masquerading as *Pramāṇa*: Esoteric Buddhism and Epistemological Nomenclature," in *Dharmakīrti's Thought and Its Impact on Indian and Tibetan Philosophy*, ed. Shoryu Katsura, Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 1999, 25–35, and Ernst Stein-kellner, "Yogic Cognition, Tantric Goal, and Other Methodological Applications of Dharmakīrti's *Kāryānumāna* Theorem," *Dharmakīrti's Thought*, 349–62. The CST contains liberal sprinkling of Yogācāra terminology, and also clearly subscribes to the central Yogācāra thesis regarding the *trikāya* theory that the *dharmakāya* qua ultimate reality is truly *acintya* and thus not accessible via rational analysis, but only via direct yogic perception, as John Makransky argues in his *Buddhahood Embodied: Sources of Controversy in India and Tibet*, Albany: SUNY Press 1997. This is particularly notable in the works of commentators such as Bhavabhāṭṭa and Bhavyakīrti. This may be no coincidence, as they were abbots of Vikramaśīla, which appears to have been a center of both Yogācāra and Tantric studies. Bhavabhāṭṭa in particular was a noted master of Yogācāra philosophy according to Tāranātha. See Chimpa and Chattopadhyaya, *Tāranātha's History*, 326.

the texts. They primarily focus on praxis, namely meditative and ritual techniques; these are thought to be aids to the direct realization of the ultimate to which the texts aspire. Unlike the *sūtras*, which continually declare that they should be publicly recited and widely disseminated, the Tantras are esoteric, and seek to restrict their circulation to an elite group of initiates. This secrecy is another feature that the *Tantras* share with relics. Relics, both the physical “Form Body” remnants and the *dhāraṇī* “Reality body” texts that were treated in the same way, are secret, almost always hidden from view. Bernard Faure, commenting on the symbolic structure at work in the case of relics, wrote that “they are sacred because they are secret, that is, withdrawn from circulation. Their secrecy or invisibility is therefore an essential part of their nature, even when they are periodically exposed. Their sacrality literally has to be cryptic, or rather, encrypted.”³¹

The need for secrecy created new imperatives for textual practice. Although Tantric traditions often claim that their scriptures descend from a lengthy precursor, the actual texts composed and utilized in these traditions tend to be brief, so that, like *dhāraṇī*, they are more easily employed in ritual uses and more easily hidden.

This attitude toward texts is evidenced in a colorful passage in the *Hevajra Tantra*:

O listen, Goddess, greatly blessed, and I will speak on the subject of books. The book should be written by one of our tradition on leaves of birch-bark twelve *aṅgula* long, with collyrium for ink and with a human bone as a pen. But if someone unworthy should see either book or painting, one will not succeed either in this world or the next. To one of our tradition it may be shown at any time. On a journey the book should be hidden in the hair or under the arm.³²

³¹ Bernard Faure, “Relics, Regalia, and the Dynamics of Secrecy in Japanese Buddhism,” in *Rending the Veil: Concealment and Secrecy in the History of Religions*, ed. Elliott R. Wolfson, New York: Seven Bridges Press 1999, 278.

³² *Hevajra Tantra* 2.7.2–4, trans. in Snellgrove, *The Hevajra Tantra*, vol. 1, 115, with emendations by me.

As twelve *āṅgula* is equivalent to the span of one's hand, the text clearly prescribes here a small and easily portable text, which is quite distinct from the immense and often elaborately decorated texts of Mahāyāna *sūtras* which were to be treated as objects of reverence. Rather, the text, which appears at first glance to be ideally suited for disclosing secrets, is physically structured so as to preserve them. This points to the paradoxical role of texts with regard to secrecy.³³

The *Cakrasamvara Tantra*, like many of the Tantras, purports to have a secret that is preserved, i.e., inadequately disclosed, by the text itself. This ambivalence concerning secrecy was a major feature of the commentatorial tradition. Elliot Wolfson's observations concerning the Kabbala tradition are particularly relevant here:

³³ Georg Simmel described this paradox as follows: "Superficially, the written utterance appears to be safer in the sense that it seems to be the only one from which 'no iota can be taken away.' Yet this prerogative of the written word is only the consequence of a lack of all those accompaniments — sound of voice, tone, gesture, facial expression — which, in the *spoken* word, are sources of both obfuscation and clarification. . . . For this reason, the letter is much more than the spoken word the locus of 'interpretations' and hence of misunderstandings — despite its clarity, or more correctly, because of it. Corresponding to the cultural level at which a relationship (or period of relationship) based on written communication is possible, the qualitative characteristics of such a relation are, likewise, sharply differentiated: what in human utterances is clear and distinct, is more clear and distinct in the letter than in speech, and what is essentially ambiguous, is more ambiguous. Expressed in terms of the categories of freedom and unfreedom on the part of the recipient of the utterance: his understanding, in regard to its logical core, is less free; but, in regard to its deeper and personal significance, his understanding is freer in the case of the letter than in that of speech. One may say that, whereas speech reveals the secret of the speaker by means of all that surrounds it — which is visible but not audible, and also includes the imponderables of the speaker himself — the letter conceals this secret. For this reason, the letter is clearer than speech where the secret of the other is *not* the issue; but where it *is* the issue, the letter is more ambiguous" (*The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. Kurt H. Wolff, Glencoe, IL: The Free Press 1950, 354–55; emphasis in original). Many thanks to Dr. Andrew Lass for bringing Simmel's work to my attention.

The matter of putting down secrets implicates the Kabbalist in a process of esoteric writing, which is predicated on the notion that written allusions to secrets become themselves secrets that require decipherment at the hand of an interpreter. In this manner, the subtle interplay of revelation and concealment fosters a rhetoric of secrecy based on the interface of orality and writing as it pertains to the dissemination of esoteric knowledge. The hermeneutical circle thus created by the paradox of the secret as that which is disclosed in its concealment and concealed in its disclosure has preserved the essential esoteric nature of this enterprise even in textual communities. . . . that have advocated a fuller written expression of secrets.³⁴

In order to see this dynamic as it manifests in a Buddhist commentatorial tradition, it would be worthwhile to look closely at the *Cakrasamvara Tantra* and its exegesis. It opens with the following verse: “And now I will explain the secret, concisely, not extensively. Union with Śrī Heruka (*śrīherukasam̐yoga*) is the means of achieving all desired aims.”³⁵ The second word in the text is “secret,” *rahasyam*. As soon as the text invokes the concept of secrecy, it must deal with the issue of its disclosure; the very next word is *vakṣye*, “I will explain.” But the text deals with this unavoidable disclosure in a highly paradoxical fashion, as is typical of esoteric traditions.

This verse sets up the expectation that the text will disclose the undisclosed. However, it does not proceed via a simple act of disclosure, but rather via a complex dance, in which the *secret* is hinted at but never fully disclosed. The very term *secret*, *rahasyam*, here corresponds to Roland Barthes’ third or obtuse level of meaning, which he defines as a “signifier without a signified.”³⁶ He wrote that,

³⁴ Elliot R. Wolfson, “Occultation of the Feminine and the Body of Secrecy,” in Wolfson, *Rending the Veil*, 118.

³⁵ This and all subsequent CST citations are my translations from my edition of the text.

³⁶ Roland Barthes, “The Third Meaning,” in his *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, New York: Hill and Wang 1977, 61. While Barthes argued for three levels of signification in the context of an analysis of Eisenstein’s cinematography,

the signifier . . . is not filled out, it keeps a permanent state of *depletion*. . . . We could also say on the contrary — and it would be just as correct — that this same signifier is not empty (cannot empty itself), that it maintains a state of perpetual erethism, desire not finding issue in that spasm of the signified which normally brings the subject voluptuously back into the peace of nominations.³⁷

Like Barthes' third meaning, "secret" of the *Cakrasamvara Tantra* turns out to be highly elusive; the first verse hints that it has to do with "union with Śrī Heruka." The commentators consider this juxtaposition to be meaningful. According to them, ultimate aim of this scripture is awakening, specifically the realization of self qua the Body of Reality.³⁸ The tradition also identifies the central deity, Śrī Heruka, with the Body of Reality, so union with or direct realization of Heruka is the aim of this tradition. From this perspective, ultimately the secret is no secret, but is rather universally pervasive. This is the position of the commentator Bhavabhaṭṭa, who was active circa 900 CE.³⁹ In his gloss upon the term

this analytic tool is, arguably, applicable to a broad array of interpretive enterprises. The comparison of Barthes' third meaning with the esoteric discourse of Buddhism was first made by Bernard Faure in his "The Buddhist Icon and the Modern Gaze," *Critical Inquiry* 24 (1998) 792. The comparison is particularly apt, for esoteric Buddhists traditionally identified three levels of signification of their scriptures, the "outer," "inner," and "secret" levels. Like Barthes' "third meaning," the Buddhist "secret" level of signification is not fixed but subject to multiple deployments. It is also often associated with sexuality. For examples of the Buddhist threefold signification see Alex Wayman's essay "Female Energy and Symbolism in the Buddhist Tantras," in his *The Buddhist Tantras: Light on Indo-Tibetan Esotericism*, 1973, repr. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass 1990, 164–201.

³⁷ Barthes, "The Third Meaning," 62.

³⁸ This point is made by several commentators, including Bhavabhaṭṭa (see To. 1403, D rgyud 'grel vol. ba, fol. 42b) and also Viravajra (see To. 1412, D rgyud 'grel vol. ma, fol. 355b).

³⁹ Bhavabhaṭṭa is reported by Tāranātha to be the fifth Tantric preceptor of Vikramaśīla. This would probably place his term circa 900 CE; see Chimpā and Chattopadhyaya, *Tāranātha's History*, 18, 326, and also section 1.3 of my forthcoming study.

rahasyam, he reduces it to its component *rahaḥ*, which means “seclusion” or “isolation.” He comments that:

As for “seclusion” (*raha*), [it indicates that] the natures of time and place are not the scope of all beings.⁴⁰ “Time” is the past and so forth. Yet time is particularly said to be perpetual. “Place” is a region. This is expressed by the word “secret,” the nature [of which] is one’s innate mode, and its defining mark is practicing the commitments, seeking instruction, worshipping, and so forth in the state of meditation upon Śrī Heruka. Now Mahāvajradhara expressed the word “seclusion” because his nature is imperceptible to all beings. Due to the lack of understanding of ordinary, alienated beings, that is, [their] being in this solitary state, it is “secret” (*rahasya*).⁴¹

Bhavabhaṭṭa’s strategy of understanding *secrecy* in terms of solitude or separation is indicative of his sophisticated approach to this issue. For him, the “secret” of the timeless and non-localizable “truth” of the Buddha’s gnosis or “Reality Body,” personified here as Śrī Heruka and Mahāvajradhara, is not “secret” due to any sort of intrinsic separation on its part. It is secret only because alienated beings, by exclusively identifying with a level of embodiment specific in time and place, are blind to it.⁴² In other words, the

⁴⁰ In Buddhalogical theory the “scope” (*gocara*) of living beings is the level of embodiment through which they relate to the world, which ordinary beings apprehend via the senses, associated with the form (*rūpa*) or manifestation (*nirmāṇa*) levels of embodiment. See Griffiths, *On Being Buddha*, 129. It is thus ordinarily a mode of experience dominated by the sense of time and place. Bhavabhaṭṭa asserts that this is not the true or complete basis of experience. For esoteric Buddhists, it only seems to be the case, as one’s experience is artificially occluded due to the misknowledge that gives rise to the egocentric self-awareness.

⁴¹ My translation from my edition of the text at IASWR mss. MBB-I-33, fol. 3a.5–3b.2, and MBB-I-70, fol. 4a.1–4b, as well as the Tibetan at To. 1403, D fol. 42b. See also Janardan Shastri Pandey, ed., *Śrīherukābhīdhānam Cakrasaṃvaratantram with the Vivṛti Commentary of Bhavabhaṭṭa*, Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies 2002, 3. Pandey’s readings differ from mine at several points.

⁴² This is perhaps comparable to the use of the term “alienation” as a “failure of self-cognition” in subaltern studies. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, London: Routledge 1987, 200.

“secret” is the secret of our own true nature, which is closed to us only by ignorance.

Bhavabhaṭṭa defines the secret with reference to elements of practice, but in a specific deployment. It is not enough to simply practice in accordance with the text, given its cryptic nature. Even practice elements such as the adept’s commitments, which the text spends several chapters describing, cannot be unambiguously put into practice purely on the basis of the text alone. To do so one must enter the community of adepts through establishing a relationship with a *guru*, from whom one would *seek instruction* (*adhyeṣaṇa*). Doing so places one within the tradition’s hermeneutical circle, and makes accessible to one the lineage oral instructions that enable the rearticulation of the occulted meditation instructions. All of this must be done *in a state of meditation upon Śrī Heruka* (*śrīheru-kabhāvanasthāne*), meaning that, in the venerable Tantric fashion, one seeks to take the aim of one’s practice as one’s path. In this state one worships *Śrī Heruka*, who is ultimately one’s own nature.

Like any spiritual exercise, this is not easily achieved, for the disarticulation of the text is profound. The reader is led to believe that the text embodies the Buddha’s *gnosis*, but like any body it is a complex entity, displaying a *texture* that is far from transparent, not revealing its innermost essence but shielding it under a veil of secrecy. “Union with *Śrī Heruka*” is to be achieved via intensive, creatively visualized self-identification with the central deities, *Śrī Heruka* and *Vajravārāhī* and their retinue, as hierarchically arranged in the *maṇḍala*, a “cosmogram” which is believed to pervade both the macrocosm of the universe and the microcosm of one’s body.⁴³ Yet these key meditation instructions, while present in the text, are

⁴³ For a study of this *maṇḍala* and its mapping across the body see my article “Mandala of the Self: Embodiment, Practice and Identity Construction in the Cakrasamvara Tradition,” forthcoming, *Journal of Religious History*. See also David Templeman, “Internal and External Geography in Spiritual Biography,” in *Sacred Spaces and Powerful Places in Tibetan Culture*, ed. Toni Huber, Dharmasala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives 1999, 187–97.

completely scrambled; their re-articulation was a major concern of the Indian and Tibetan commentators.

On the other hand, the text does give relatively clear accounts of ritual procedures involving elements such as the *mantras*, *maṇḍalas*, and so forth, but these are presented as subsidiary and dependent upon the *gnosis* achieved via the “secret.” Thus in chapter nine, at the end of a lengthy exposition of rituals employing the tantra’s root mantra, the text claims that “one who longs for success (*siddhi*) without knowing the gnosis of Śrī Heruka is threshing chaff, and is bereft of this mantra. This man will not obtain power nor happiness.”⁴⁴

Prior realization is an essential prerequisite for success in the rites described in the text; yet the practice elements are a key aspect of the “secret” to achieving this prerequisite realization. The key to this problem is the concept of the “secret,” *rahasya*, which epitomizes the paradox centering around the text, which, Janus faced, points toward both practice and an understanding which transcends it. Here it is truly an empty signifier for it is meaningful only in terms of an absence, an absence of understanding on the part of the reader. Its disclosure is also a non-disclosure, given the obscurity that surrounds the essential practices, the very expression of which is the purpose of the text. This paradox is perhaps best exemplified by the first two verses of chapter ten, which deal as follows with the theme of a Buddha’s triple embodiment:

Next I will explain the Triple Body in accordance with non-dual union with Śrī Heruka, through which they succeed by means of consciousness only. Have no doubt regarding this. I proclaim gnosis (*jñāna*) when one becomes adept in the bodies of the Reality Body.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ My translation from my edition; cf. Pandey, *Śrīherukābhīdhānam*, 80. The term *siddhi* here refers to the magical powers that successful application of the mantra is thought to yield. However, such successful deployment of the mantra depends upon the gnosis of Śrī Heruka, without which these ritual applications are believed to be ineffective.

⁴⁵ CST ch. 10.1–2; my translation from my edition; cf. Pandey, *Śrīherukābhīdhānam*, 82.

This passage problematizes the facile assumption that the secret concerns practice alone. Evidently, it is not sufficient to simply decode the text's practice instructions. For here we are told that Śrī Heruka's disclosure of his *gnosis* is contingent upon one being "adept in the bodies of the Reality body," implying that one is already familiar with this gnosis. This makes the realization of the "secret," here the *gnosis* itself and not the practice elements that lead to it, a prerequisite for its disclosure, which seems to be an irresolvable paradox. The claim that success here is to be made via "consciousness only" (*vijñānamātreṇa*) also undercuts the supposed primacy of practice.

Bhavabhaṭṭa's commentary here opens up a potential doorway to the text's resolution, one that is consonant with the general Tantric worldview:

As for the means of achieving the **Reality Body**, as it is 'reality' and also a 'body' it is the 'Body of Reality.' It is the Victors (*jināḥ*) whose body this is. **When one has become their adept** then there is success, and **I proclaim gnosis**. I characterize and define the gnosis which is the Reality Body as being free of singularity and plurality, always being the scope of the Tathāgatas, and being the natural clear light. The Reality Body is the totality, the Victor's own form. Thus it is said to be not singular nor multiple, it manifests as the basis of the great perfection which benefits self and other. It is neither existent nor non-existent. It is sky-like and experientially uniform. Its nature is difficult to understand. It is stainless and unchanging, auspicious and unequalled. It is pervasive yet unadulterated (*niṣprapañca*). I bow down to that very potential for self-knowledge as the peerless Reality Body of the Victors.⁴⁶

Bhavabhaṭṭa's vision appears to be a virtuous cycle of sorts, a progressively unfolding revelation of the self as the ultimate, involving the mediation of an authority figure, the *guru*. Under such guidance, one can literally *rearticulate* the text that *is* the relic or

⁴⁶ My translation from my edition of the text at IASWR mss. MBB-I-33, fol. 61b.1–5, and MBB-I-70, fol. 60a.9–b.4; cf. Pandey, *Śriherukābhīdhānam*, 82. The terms being commented upon in this passage are in bold font.

disordered trace of the Buddha's gnosis, manifesting textually as the deliberate obscurantism whereby key teachings are disarticulated and scattered throughout the text.⁴⁷ For this tradition, the individual's engagement with the text is an embodied practice, one in which textual performance becomes a reenactment of the Buddha's presence, and a reconstitution of his gnosis.

Further Reflections

The concept of secrecy is protean, and also political. "Disclosing the secret" was never an unproblematic act, nor was it ever final. As Derrida argued with respect to the "secret" of Judaism:

The Jewish *Geheimnis*, the hearth in which one looks for the center under a sensible cover — the tent of the tabernacle, the stone of the temple, the robe that clothes the text of the covenant — is finally discovered as an empty room, is not uncovered, never ends being uncovered, as it has nothing to show."⁴⁸

This view, which has been profitably applied to Jewish mysticism by Elliot Wolfson,⁴⁹ is also applicable to Tantric Buddhism. For while commentators such as Bhavabhaṭṭa were undoubtedly convinced that their interpretation of the "secret" was the final and definitive one, if we look diachronically at the interpretation of the text over the centuries, we see that the "secret" is truly an empty signifier, devoid of fixed referent. Instead, its interpretation changed through time and cultural space, accommodating the changing needs of Tantric Buddhist communities.

The *Cakrasamvara Tantra* and the earliest texts addressing it were evidently composed at the margins of Indian society, by

⁴⁷ On the issue of the resolution of the hermeneutical circle in the ideal Tantric vision of teacher-student interaction see Robert Thurman, "Vajra Hermeneutics," in *Buddhist Hermeneutics*, ed. Donald Lopez, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 1988, 119–48.

⁴⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, trans. J. Leavey and R. Rand, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 1986, 50.

⁴⁹ See Wolfson, *Rending the Veil*, 116, n. 7.

renunciant yogins.⁵⁰ In the earliest commentaries, the “secret” is rather unambiguously associated with practice elements, and in particular the practice of sex. For Jayabhadra, a commentator who was active during the mid-ninth century,⁵¹ the “secret” was directly concerned with sexuality. He wrote that,

The “secret” (*rahasyam*) is that which should be hidden, i.e., so that there is no disclosure to the disciples and so forth.⁵² Now, that which is achieved through the union of the wisdom and art is the secret. Moreover, the penis, vulva and seminal essence are the three secrets. *Ra* is said to mean “penis,” and the syllable *ha*, “vulva.” *Syam* designates the seed of those two. This is because the syllable *ra* is shaped like the tip of the penis, the syllable *ha* has the shape of a bird’s beak, and the combination of the two syllables *sa* and *ya* has the form of the seed of the two.⁵³

As the Cakrasamvara tradition developed in India, the concept of the secret shifted to accommodate the new socio-political contexts

⁵⁰ For an excellent survey of the milieu in which the CST and related Buddhist tantras were composed see Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*.

⁵¹ Tāranātha wrote that Jayabhadra was the third Tantric preceptor at Vikramaśīla, which suggests that he was active during the early- to mid-ninth century. His work appears to be the earliest surviving CST commentary, and thus is of great historical importance. See Chimpa and Chattopadhyaya, *Tāranātha’s History*, 18, 325.

⁵² The term “disciple” (*śrāvaka*) is often used in Tantric Buddhist literature to refer to the more conservative members of the older *nikāya* Buddhist traditions such as the Theravāda, who disapproved of the Tantras and the transgressive practices some of them advocate.

⁵³ Jayabhadra’s comments are based upon similarities that he sees between letters of the Sanskrit alphabet (as written in ninth century Northeastern India) and the male and female genital organs. He employs the euphemisms for these organs common in Buddhist literature, namely *vajra* for “penis,” *padma* for “vulva,” and *bodhicitta* for what I term “seminal essence,” namely male and female sexual fluids. His text occurs as follows in my reading of his *Cakrasamvarapañjikā*, from IASWR ms. #MBB-I-122, fol. 2b.3–6: *rahasyaṃ gopaniyaṃ sarvaśrāvakādibhyo aprakāśyāt / athavā prajñopāyayor ekikaraṇena sādhyam tad rahasyam / athavā vajrapadmabodhicittaṃ caiva tat trayaṃ rahasyam / r[akāraḥ] [va]jra iti prokto / hakāraḥ padma ucyaṭe / ubhayos taylor bīja syam ity abhidhiyate / ra[kāra]sya*

in which the tradition found itself. From the ninth through twelfth centuries in India, the tradition was adopted, and adapted, by Buddhist monastic communities. Commentaries such as Bhavabhaṭṭa's were composed in this new milieu, in which very different concerns were brought to the fore. In this context, the transgressive, body-oriented practices of the early tradition were de-emphasized. Here the facile equation of the secret to specific practices was problematized, while the gnosis or realization of ultimate reality, the aim of the practices, was emphasized. New practices to achieve this end were developed, namely the "subtle body" visualization exercises that were meant to replace the sexual practices that were rightly deemed transgressive within the monastic Buddhist context.⁵⁴

Commentary is always an act of interpretation, an attempt to re(en)vise the text in light of changing socio-historical circumstances. In this tradition, the very notion of secrecy could be deployed to achieve a political end, namely sublimation.⁵⁵ Through the lens of the commentaries, we can trace the process by which Buddhists shaped and reshaped their traditions to adapt to the values

vajrasūcyākāratvāt / hakārasya khagamukhākāratvāt / sakārayakārayoḥ saṃyogasya ubhayabījarūpatvāt.

⁵⁴ For example, the CST is a text predominantly focusing on female deities, who collectively constitute the "network of ḍākinis," *ḍākinijāla*, which populate the tradition's maṇḍala. There are strong indications that this term originally referred to groups of female practitioners or yoginis who would gather on special occasions at sacred sites. One of the predominant concerns of the text is instructing the initiated male adept regarding the secrets of recognizing and communicating with these yoginis. For the later tradition, however, the *yoginis* are largely reduced to goddesses who are identified with, and visualized within, features of the male adept's body. Such internalized practice was undoubtedly far more acceptable within the monastic Buddhist context.

⁵⁵ By "sublimation" I refer specifically to David White's argument that sexual practices were gradually effaced in Hindu tantric traditions and replaced by sanitized practices in which actual sex was replaced by symbolic ritual or internalized visualization exercises. See his *Kiss of the Yoginī: "Tantric Sex" in South Asian Contexts*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2003, 219–257. A very similar

of different social contexts. This adaptation was typically carried out through the guise of “disclosing the secret.”

Such commentatorial creativity was facilitated by the very notion of the “secret,” the disclosure of which can never be final. The secret, since it is empty, is also a shifting signifier. For the later Indian tradition, the “secret practices” of their predecessors are no longer “the secret,” but rather the misguided praxis of “fools” who take literally the erotic passages in the text.⁵⁶ The secret becomes a more subtle and rarified entity, accessible only to a chosen few not on the basis of embodied experience but rather on the basis of a disembodied awareness or understanding.

This process of creative commentatorial re-articulation and sublimation occurred in two comparable yet significantly different fashions, in Tibet, where the tradition became almost completely dominated by the monastic institutions, and in the Kathmandu valley, where it was preserved and practiced by the married Newar Vajrācārya priestly couples. This process is on-going, and not without loss. In Tibet particularly, we see a process whereby a relatively gynocentric tradition which elevated female deities and (possibly) female practitioners to high positions was re-fashioned in an androcentric manner.⁵⁷ Ultimately female practitioners were largely excluded from positions of authority, and some of the most sacred pilgrimage spots of the tradition, such as Tsari Mountain in Southeastern Tibet, which are supposedly the abodes of the femi-

process seems to have occurred in Buddhism as the transgressive Yoginītantra traditions were adopted by Buddhist monastic institutions during the ninth and tenth centuries.

⁵⁶ For example, the eleventh century scholar Abhayākara Gupta disparages as “childish” those who travel the land seeking the yoginīs in the gathering places, rather than practicing the more rarified, internalized yogic practices. See his *Śrīsam-putatantrarājaṭīkāmnāyamañjarī-nāma*, To. 1198, D rgyud ‘grel vol. cha, fol. 152a.

⁵⁷ The argument for gynocentric origins for the tradition is made by Miranda Shaw in her *Passionate Enlightenment: Women in Tantric Buddhism*, Princeton: Princeton UP 1994. While the commentaries do indicate the gradual effacement of the female body as the tradition was adapted into the Buddhist monastic context,

nine deities, were closed to female adepts.⁵⁸ Here too, as in the case of the Jewish mystical tradition described by Wolfson, the feminine body, which was highlighted in the early tradition, is occulted.⁵⁹

Yet the “secret,” while shiftable, cannot be fixed, but zigzags. Ironically, in the sublimated and highly refined present-day traditions the body-oriented practices re-emerge as the most secret of secrets, which should not seem surprising if we keep in mind Derrida’s remark that a genealogy of secrecy “is also a history of sexuality.”⁶⁰ It is often denied and rarely disclosed, yet is ineradicable and remains an important if largely invisible aspect of the living tradition.⁶¹

In order to begin to comprehend the literature of an esoteric and mystical tradition, it is essential that we understand the textual models that are operative in the tradition, which often differ significantly from those informing the literature of related exoteric facets of the religion. In turn, it is also important that we understand the

Shaw’s strong argument concerning the agency of female practitioners in the early Indian tradition is not well-supported by extant evidence. For critiques of her argument see Liz Wilson’s review of her book in *History of Religions* 36.1 (1996) 60–64, and also Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 92–96.

⁵⁸ Regarding the general exclusion of female Tibetan practitioners from positions of authority see Kim Gutschow, *Being a Buddhist Nun: The Struggle for Enlightenment in the Himalayas*, Cambridge: Harvard UP 2004. On the exclusion of women from the highest levels of a popular Tibetan Cakrasamvara pilgrimage route see Toni Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain: Popular Pilgrimage and Visionary Landscape in Southeast Tibet*, New York: Oxford UP 1999, chs. 6, 7.

⁵⁹ See Wolfson, “Occultation of the Feminine,” in his *Rending the Veil*.

⁶⁰ Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1995, 3, cited in Wolfson, *Rending the Veil*, 120. On the connection between secrecy and sexuality in Jewish mysticism see Elliot Wolfson, “From Sealed Book to Open Text: Time, Memory, and Narrativity in Kabbalistic Hermeneutics” in *Interpreting Judaism in a Postmodern Age*. Steven Kepnes, ed. (New York: New York UP, 1996), 145–78. As in the case of Jewish tradition, which inspired Derrida’s remark and is also subject of Wolfson’s analysis, secrecy and sexuality are closely linked in Tantric Buddhist traditions.

⁶¹ Regarding the ways in which sexual practices have been maintained by

uses of the text, the arts of reading and commentary whereby the text is put into practice. For esoteric traditions, the concept of the secret and its disclosure plays a pivotal role not only in this process, but also in the process by which the tradition grows and changes through time and space. Reading these texts requires what we might fairly term “intellectual archeology,” a term particularly meaningful in light of the metaphor of the “relic” which has suffused this paper. For today the *Cakrasamvara Tantra* itself truly is a relic, a starting point in a historical process of disclosure that has moved far beyond the text itself. In Tibetan and Newar Buddhist communities scriptures such as the *Cakrasamvara Tantra* are not the objects of frequent and sustained study.⁶² The infrequently read Tantras are displayed, like a relic or object of reverence, artfully wrapped and stored away behind and above an altar. Ensconced with them are the commentaries of past generations, whose disclosures are no longer relevant to contemporary communities. These textual relics, however, contain traces and hints that collectively yield important evidence concerning the history of the tradition, provided that we have the requisite patience and understanding to read them. Doing so will prove very rewarding, as it will deepen our understanding of the relationships between textual practices and spiritual development in mystical traditions.

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ostensibly celibate Tibetan Buddhist practitioners see June Campbell's *Traveller in Space: In Search of Female Identity in Tibetan Buddhism* (New York: George Braziller, 1996).

⁶² I refer here to the *Tantras* themselves, which, in my experience, appear to rarely studied by contemporary Tibetan practitioners, even in the case of very popular traditions such as the *Cakrasamvara*. Ritual texts and relatively contemporary commentaries seem to receive far greater attention in these communities.

THE CONFLICT OVER CICERO'S HOUSE:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE RITUAL ELEMENT
IN *DE DOMO SUA*

ANDERS LISDORF

Summary

According to the Romans themselves ritual was at the heart of their culture. Strangely, this centrality of ritual has not been matched by a corresponding sensitivity to how ritual was to be interpreted. Ritual has most often been viewed as an empty formalism devoid of any true belief. It is argued in this article that this view of ritual is an ethnocentric construct stemming from a Christian conception of belief, which does not adequately account for the peculiarities of ritual based religions. Taking the seemingly obscure and little studied case of the conflict over Cicero's house as a case, it is argued that E. Thomas Lawson's and Robert N. McCauley's ritual theory might help to overcome this misconception of ritual. This enables us to see how Cicero explicates implicit beliefs entailed by the ritual actions. Ultimately the evidence seems to support the reverse interpretation: that ritual was taken very seriously.

Introductions

In the spring of 56 BCE Cicero, triumphant after having been called home from his exile, gave a speech in front of the Roman priestly college of the *pontifices* to convince them that he could be given back his house without any risk of divine retribution. This speech, or at least something resembling it, is preserved in the text *De domo sua*. The speech is one of the least popular and least read by Cicero. A sign of this is that no commentary has been written on it, while most other texts by Cicero have one or more. But his text has the possibility of offering a lot more than its history seems to indicate. When it has been used in research it has typically been in one of two ways: either as a quarry for technicalities on Roman sacral law, or for exposing Cicero as a hypocrite who manipulated

religion to his own benefits.¹ The first purpose is relatively innocent in its antiquarian outlook, whereas the second is more problematic. The problem goes right to the heart of modern scholarship's interpretation of Roman religion in particular, but also of religions with a strong focus on ritual in general.

The "manipulation hypothesis"² is based on a very specific view of ritual as opposed to true belief, which can be traced back at least to the Romantic era (Héran 1986:241). The hypothesis is that Roman ritual was devoid of any truly religious belief, and was reduced to mere formalities. Since this was the case, Roman ritual and religion as a whole were no more than instruments of manipulation, be it towards the gullible masses or political opponents among the elite. This divorce between ritual and true religious belief is clearly expressed by W. Warde Fowler: "... the religious instinct, the desire to be in right relation with the power manifesting itself in the universe was first soothed and satisfied, then hypnotized and paralysed by the formalisation and gradual secularisation of religious processes" (Fowler 1971:306). This view of ritual as a fossilised formality devoid of sincere belief is representative of more than a century of research.³

So while ritual was disregarded as a locus of belief, the search for Roman religion was transferred to mythology. This mythology was captured in some of the poets, who, however, had mostly stolen it from the Greeks, a fact which only contributed to the view of Romans as insincere. The problem with the Romans was the same as for the Greeks: Did they really believe in their myths?⁴

¹ See respectively Wissowa 1971 *passim*; Taylor 1975:90.

² Cf. Rasmussen 2003 for further references on this.

³ For a review of this attitude see Durand and Scheid 1994:31. Although recent research represented by Georges Dumézil, Jean Pierre Vernant, and Walter Burkert have escaped the view of ritual as manipulation they still only use ritual as "... un indice d'autres choses" (37).

⁴ See the classic treatment of Greek perceptions of myth by Paul Veyne which has many good reflections (Veyne 1983). Another study pertaining directly to

The real problem seems to be what is meant by belief. It is necessary to distinguish between implicit and explicit beliefs. Explicit beliefs are those known from Christian theology such as dogmas. They can be read from texts directly. Implicit beliefs are not stated directly and therefore more volatile and harder to detect analytically.⁵ One of the most perceptive analyses on the relation between belief and ritual in Roman religion is that of Linder and Scheid (1993). They argue that Roman belief was an altogether other type of belief: “. . . il existait une foi dans la religion romaine. A la différence de la foi chrétienne, elle n’était pas explicitée autrement que par l’acte rituel; elle . . . se réduisait à un ou deux ‘articles’ fondamentaux. Elle donnait pour acquise l’existence des dieux et posait la nécessité et l’efficacité du commerce rituelle avec eux” (55).

When you get behind these implicit assumptions, it is possible to see that, “Cette ‘foi’ postulait que les dieux étaient bons, cohabitaient avec les humains dans le monde, c’est-à-dire dans les cités, et se soumettaient aux idéaux de la cité” (57). While this is a great advance on earlier positions, it is still difficult to see exactly how to get at these implicit beliefs, and how more precisely they are related to ritual action.

So while recent research has become increasingly aware that Roman religion has been misunderstood because of Christianising ideas of what a religion should be, there is still no concrete methodological and theoretical framework for analysing the relation between these implicit beliefs and ritual acts. I will argue that general ritual theories such as that of E. Thomas Lawson and Robert N. McCauley may shed some light on this problem and help us reach a greater

Rome also focuses on the literary dimension: Dennis Feeney *Literature and Religion at Rome* (Feeney 1998).

⁵ François Héran distinguishes between *credo* and *croyance*, where the *credo* is implicit, practical and communal, and *croyance* is explicit, theoretical and individual (Héran 1986:232–33).

understanding of Roman religion and society in general, and Cicero's speech, *De domo sua*, in particular.

The Context

In his speech, *De domo sua*, Cicero defended his right to reclaim his house after his return from exile. The speech was held in the senate in 56 BCE. His opponent in the speech, as in general, was Publius Clodius Pulcher. The political climate in the mid-1st century BCE was marked by political rivalry primarily between two factions: the followers of Pompey (including Cicero) and the followers of Caesar (partly including Clodius). Cicero had been consul in 63, and two years later Clodius had been accused of sacrilege by Cicero. In 58 Clodius was elected plebeian tribune, an office he used to have Cicero exiled and his estate confiscated. Cicero was called back in 57. This is where the story behind Cicero's speech *De domo sua* starts. Although he was allowed to come back, his estate was still confiscated, and during his exile a part of his house on the Palatine had been dedicated to the goddess Libertas. This meant that he would not be able to inhabit the house, however willing the senate might be to give him the house back. It was simply not theirs to give. It was therefore vital for him to demonstrate that the house was not dedicated to Libertas, so that there was no problem for him to get it back. That is the overall aim of the speech.

The Speech De domo sua

Three themes can be distinguished in the speech. The first centres on a representation of Cicero as the preserver of order in relation to the gods (*dom.* 144–47), which is a general feature of his speeches in this period. This is elaborated through a listing of Roman virtues and setting them as equal to the preservation of the state and represented by Cicero, whereas everything not virtuous is portrayed as a threat to the state, and as represented by the opponent. This is a general structure in Cicero's forensic speeches,

where what varies seems only to be the names of the defendant and the opponent. Expressed in structuralist terms the relation in the speech is Cicero : Clodius :: the Roman State : Chaos.

There are also day to day political themes in the speech, such as commentaries on Pompey's appointment as responsible for the grain supply. These can be seen as incidental remarks, made because Cicero had the right of speech, but not directly relevant to the subject he is speaking about.⁶

The last theme concerns ritual, and centres on rituals involving Clodius which were performed in ways less than satisfactory to Cicero's taste. This is actually a ritual history focusing on Clodius. Thus three distinct themes can be seen in the speech: (1) a cosmological theme; (2) a political theme; (3) a ritual theme.

The first theme has traditionally been of interest to historians of religion, whereas the second has interested ancient historians. The third has generally been ignored or subsumed under one of the previous themes. Contrary to tradition I will argue that Cicero's treatment of the two first themes is relatively banal, but that the third theme is the really interesting one and also central to the whole argument of his speech. As we shall see, this is not the route taken in the sparse previous research on this speech, which has resulted in a less than coherent explanation of the argument that Cicero produces. I shall not spend time on the previous two themes as they have been eloquently treated elsewhere (Goar 1972; Rawson 1975; Wissowa 1971). Let us therefore start with how Cicero argues his case in relation to the ritual history.

The Ritual History

Cicero's opponent Clodius had been adopted into a plebeian *gens*. The Romans had two primary groups of *gentes*, the patricians and the plebeians. The most notable difference between them was that some offices were reserved for the plebeians exclusively. One

⁶ Cicero is himself aware that this falls outside his subject (*dom.* 32)

example of this, as we shall see, is the plebeian tribune, an office which could only be occupied by a plebeian male.

Cicero starts by arguing that Clodius' adoption was carried out under suspicious circumstances. Coming from one of the biggest and most famous patrician *gentes* — Claudia (of which Clodia is a branch) — Clodius had been adopted into the plebeian *gens* Fonteia (*dom.* 35). Under normal circumstances the person adopting had to be a person who could no longer have children for one reason or another. For example the wife could be barren; the husband could be too old or had lost his wife. Thus it was expected that the adoptee was young, if not a child. In the case of Clodius' adoption, however, the adoptee was a grown up man, who had already been consul, whereas the adopter was 20 years old, married, and had every possibility to have children (*dom.* 34).

When a person was adopted in Roman republican times, he had to denounce the religious duties of his old *gens* and assume those of the new. These duties (*gentilicia sacra*) could be the observance of special days marked by rites, the care of holy places, or other private religious observances. Clodius had not done this (*dom.* 35), something which could be a potential offence to the gods. He had also diminished the honour of the Clodian *gens* by leaving it as a former consul. This leads Cicero to conclude that Clodius had not been adopted in accordance with religious laws, and that an adoption had in fact not taken place.⁷ Thus, three reasons are mentioned: (1) the age difference is wrong; (2) no legitimate reason had been given for the adoption; (3) *dignitas* and *religio* (honour and religious piety) had been offended.

But these are not the only rules that were broken. On the day Clodius' adoption took place, one of the consuls, Bibulus, was looking for auspices,⁸ which in sacral law obstructed a number of

⁷ *factus es eius filius contra fas* (*dom.* 35), and *nego istam adoptionem pontificio iure esse factam* (*dom.* 36).

⁸ The technical term is *de caelo servare*.

legal and religious actions.⁹ Adoption belonged to this class of acts¹⁰. Moreover, the law (*lex*) proposal for Clodius' adoption (an adoption was a law) was made public only three hours before it was passed, whereas the normal interval between the publication and the passing of a law was three weeks.¹¹ So correct procedures were also violated in this regard.

Cicero can therefore conclude that Clodius' adoption was against any type of law known to the Romans.¹²

The Tribunate

If Clodius had not been adopted he could not be a plebeian, and if Clodius was not a plebeian he could not have been a plebeian tribune (*tribunus plebis*). Cicero therefore does not consider Clodius' tribunate legitimate.

But why does it matter whether Clodius was or was not a legitimate tribune? The fact is that only a plebeian tribune had the authority to confiscate a criminal's estate in the name of the Roman state.¹³ Such a confiscation is a kind of consecration, which means that the ownership passes to one or more gods. It nevertheless had

⁹ *cum de caelo servatum sit, cum populo agi non posse* (dom. 49), cf. Linderski 1986.

¹⁰ An adoption is a legal as well as a religious act. It takes place in the otherwise not often used court called *comitia calata* (cf. Michels 1967:37–38; Wissowa 1971:511).

¹¹ *Si quod in ceteris legibus trinum nundinum esse oportet, id in adoptione satis est trium esse horarum* (dom. 41). The expression *trinum nundinum* is a technical term meaning after three *nundinae*. *Nundinae* were originally market days, and the term is derived from *novem dies* — nine days. Because of the Roman way of counting inclusively there were seven regular days between two *nundinae*. Thus *trinum nundinum* is the interval between three market days, which is 24 days all in all. So, strictly speaking, the translation “three weeks” is not precise. For details on the *trinum nundinum*, cf. Michels 1967.

¹² *iam intelligis omni genere iuris, quod in sacris, quod in auspiciis, quod in legibus* (dom. 42).

¹³ What is called *consecratio capitis bonorum*; cf. Wissowa 1971:388–89.

to be authorised by the senate and the people, or happen after a criminal trial (*dom.* 33).

The Consecration

It was necessary for Cicero's house to become dedicated to a god by ritual action. Sometimes this is called *consecratio*, at other times *dedicatio*. Sometimes a distinction seems to be made between these terms (*dom.* 125), sometimes not; it is in any case difficult to see any consistent distinction in terminology. Still, the sequence and content of the actual rituals seem pretty clear. The terms consecration and dedication will therefore be used as analytical terms that may or may not reflect the actual terminology.

When a building is consecrated, it means that the ownership passes over to a god. The building becomes an *aedes sacra*. In the dedication formula obligations and rules regulating behaviour in relation to the specific temple is specified. The state is responsible for these obligations. For example it could be specified that a procession had to take place once a year. In that case the state was obliged to finance it. An entity which was *sacrum* was also *publicum*, that is, public for the people at large. In Cicero's case, a part of the house, a portico, had been dedicated to the goddess Libertas. Although we do not know much about the ritual, two separate processes seem to be the most important. First, some sort of approval or authorisation by the senate or people (*populus*,¹⁴ *plebs*¹⁵) seems to be needed, or at least a consultation of the pontifical college, which consisted of experts in sacred law (*dom.* 132, 136). None of these kinds of authorisation had been procured.

¹⁴ It is interesting that Cicero mentions another case of a dedication which was overruled on grounds of it not having been authorised by the people: *quod in loco publico Licinia, Caii filia, iniussu populi dedicasset, sacrum non viderier* (*dom.* 136).

¹⁵ Cicero hypothetically suggests that the *Lex Papiria* might apply to the case concerning his house. In that case the *plebs* should have been asked (*dom.* 127–28).

Dedication

The final ritual should be performed by Clodius and a *pontifex*. Cicero mentions that the *pontifex* was his wife's brother P. Licinius Natta, who had been co-opted into the college just days before. Roman priesthood does not entail any previous training, so Cicero attacks his inexperience and (probable) lack of knowledge (*dom.* 118). It was also customary that older members of the college were present during the initial rituals, which had not been the case here. Cicero insinuates that Clodius needed to pick the man from his own family, because everyone else would know it was wrong. Moreover, part of the ritual was that the *pontifex* should put his hand on the doorpost and utter certain words,¹⁶ but it is hard to put the hand on the doorpost in a portico. So Cicero thinks that even the object of dedication does not qualify.

Because of Licinius' young age Cicero concludes that he either did not do anything, and that therefore no dedication had taken place, or he had performed the ritual with a shaking hand, and stuttered some broken words, which could not possibly have been in accordance with tradition (*mos, rite, caste: dom.* 134–35). Clodius probably also participated in the ritual; Cicero knows of a rumour that he had ignored negative portents, and made a series of ritual flaws in relation to the dedication (*dom.* 140).

As a summary Cicero writes: “allow not, then, validity to the alleged proceedings of an ignorant youth, a novice in the priesthood . . . who acted without knowledge, without consent, without colleagues, without books, with none to support you, none to bake the cakes of sacrifice, but surreptitiously and with mind and tongue that wavered” (*dom.* 139).¹⁷

¹⁶ Which seems to be the part of the ritual most widely known to the public (e.g. Liv. 2.8).

¹⁷ *ne veleat id, quod imperitu adolescens, novus sacerdos . . . ignarus, invitus, sine colegiis, sine libris, sine auctore, sine fictore, furtim, mente ac lingua titubante fecisse dicatur.*

Thus, the following had gone wrong with the dedication:

- 1) It had not been approved.
- 2) The agent, the *pontifex*, had not been sufficiently trained.
- 3) The object did not qualify.
- 4) The act was wrongly performed because the words had not been pronounced properly.

Summing up this analysis we can distinguish four key sequences in the ritual history: Clodius' adoption, Clodius' tribunate, the consecration of Cicero's estate, and the dedication of the house.

Previous Research

The *De domo sua* has, as mentioned above, not been a favourite object of analysis. The most frequent use has been as a quarry for technical details about Roman sacral law;¹⁸ indeed many facts about the sacral law are not known outside this text.

R.J. Goar on *De domo sua*

The best and most thorough treatment is found in R.J. Goars *Cicero and State Religion*. Goar presents an analysis which has been typical for the view of Roman religion in general. In Goar's analysis the mention of Clodius' adoption is seen as an insignificant and potentially insulting part, because Cicero is lecturing the highest experts (the *pontifices* to whom the speech is primarily addressed) on sacral law. The treatment of Bibulus' *obnuntiatio* is regarded as having only a political interest. Concerning the final dedication of the house to Libertas, Goar thinks that Cicero has a problem, because it actually *was* consecrated: "Therefore Cicero was compelled to bring that body [the *pontifices*] certain considerations that might offset the fact that the consecration had actually taken place" (Goar 1972:51). That Cicero is focusing on Clodius'

¹⁸ Which can be seen from the frequent citations from this text in Wissowa 1971.

character is seen as the primary strategy to undermine the dedication: "... if a consecration is instigated by a bad man for a base motive, then it cannot be valid" (52), and "in attacking the *consecratio* he had the letter of pontifical law against him, and therefore appealed to its spirit."¹⁹

This however is an idea which is not to my knowledge attested anywhere in Roman republican times. That moral considerations should have any impact on a man's ritual competence seems utterly alien to Roman state religion. If the person performing the ritual had any base motives, something which would lead to disaster, the gods would surely intervene in the ritual and give a sign, which Cicero actually insinuates when saying that Clodius ignored several omens. After all, Roman state religion is replete with rites aiming at securing the will of the gods. Incidentally, this is what Cicero thinks assures that Roman law is in accordance with divine law (Linderski 1995). The idea of a ritual having a spirit would be utterly alien to the ancient Roman; either the ritual had been performed properly or it had not. This does not, however, preclude the later detection of a ritual flaw in a seemingly properly conducted ritual (Linderski 1986). Goar does not realise that the point of the speech is to substantiate the claim that the dedication simply had not taken place, because it had not been properly performed, and that Cicero's house was therefore not *sacra*. His interpretation also blurs the connection between the adoption, the tribunate, the consecration, and the dedication. These misunderstandings lead Goar to the wrong conclusion: "Cicero did, at least, tend to combat the legalism of Roman religion with moral ideas" (55). On the contrary, the reverse seems to be the case.

Goar thinks that the first point (cosmology) is what decides the case, as the third point (ritual) is a dead end, which is why Cicero's main strategy is to undermine Clodius morally. The conclusion, I would argue, is the opposite: the ritual argument is the

¹⁹ Also Elisabeth Rawson interprets the speech in this light, but as a betrayal of the senate (Rawson 1975:124).

decisive one, and the moral one is superfluous. To show this, I have found Lawson's and McCauley's ritual theory useful.

Modern Ritual Theory

In anthropology and other areas in the history of religion, ritual has been a centre of attention, and many fruitful theories have been suggested. Ritual has turned out to be a multifaceted phenomenon, and modern ritual theories have focused on different aspects of ritual. For this analysis I have singled out E. Thomas Lawson's and Robert N. McCauley's cognitive theory of religious ritual representation. The cognitive science of religion has already proved fruitful as a heuristic tool for shedding new light on many old problems (Gragg 2004; Martin 2004).

Lawson's and McCauley's Theory of Ritual

Lawson's and McCauley's theory of ritual (Lawson and McCauley 1990; McCauley and Lawson 2002) has been submitted to several cross-cultural empirical tests, which have proven its viability (see Abbink 1995; Barrett and Lawson 2001; Barret and Malley 2003). The theory focuses on how ritual action is represented cognitively. Rituals are seen as normal actions, capable of being represented by ordinary cognitive abilities. The representation of an action consists of an agent, an act, and an object. This forms the basis of what they term "the Action Representation System." An example of an ordinary action is "the ball breaks the window." Prior enabling actions can be embedded in the surface representation of the action structure; in the example quoted that could be "the boy throws the ball." Thus, the action representation system is a recursive system.

The difference between ordinary and ritual action consists in Culturally Postulated Superhuman agents (CPS agents) being represented somewhere in the full action representation structure, and that they effect changes in the world (Lawson and McCauley 1990:159). Examples of CPS agents are ancestors, gods and spirits.

Also the necessary properties of persons, acts and objects are central for the judgement of the action's efficacy. Lawson and McCauley have developed a rich formal system to analyse this.

Rituals are often built from multiple embedded rituals, whether actual or hypothetical (often found in mythology and legend). These embedded rituals are decisive for a rituals' efficacy, in so far as they achieve connection to a CPS agent. If the CPS agent is represented as somehow acting, either directly or through an intermediary, the action will have permanent consequences. An example: For a Christian to have the property "Christian" he needs to be baptised, and for a baptism to count as a baptism it is necessary for a person with the property "priest" to perform the baptism with consecrated water. The property "priest" is a function of a prior embedded action — the ordaining of a person by the church, which recursively turn on the founding of the church by Jesus (Lawson and McCauley 1990).

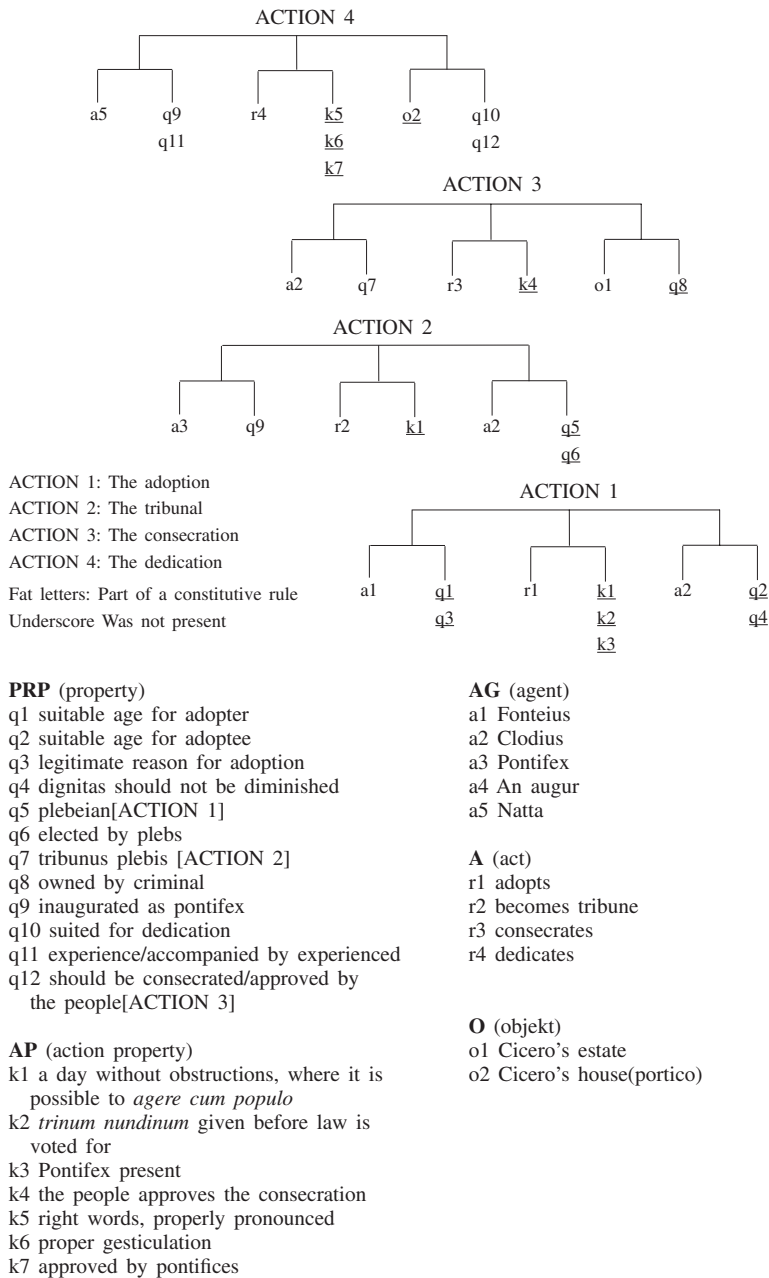
The most important in this context is that Lawson's and McCauley's theory and formal model supplies us with a frame for conceptualising special properties of rituals and their interconnectedness. The example shows that some properties are necessary (being a priest), while others are not (the time of day, although some might be more suitable than others). The formal system does not supply us with a means to distinguish the necessary from the non-necessary. However, others have theorised this distinction, as for example Emily Ahern (1982) and Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw (1994:116), who borrow the distinction between constitutive and regulative rules in rituals from Searle (1969:33–42). Constitutive rules have the shape of definitions. These are rules that constitute or define an activity. Regulative rules can be paraphrased as imperatives, expressing ways this activity should be regulated or carried out. It is important to find out which rules are regulative and which are constitutive, because this is essential for understanding ritual action and action in general (Ahern 1982).

The (Non-)Dedication of Cicero's House to Libertas

If we analyse the case of *De domo sua* according to Lawson's and McCauley's theory, we are there dealing with what they call a "ritual alteration of objects" (1990:103), that is, an alteration in the religious conceptual scheme of Cicero's house from something ordinary, non-religious, to something with the property *sacra*. In this light, Cicero's goal is to convince the superior board of priests (*pontifices*) that no embedded actions related to any CPS agent has taken place, thus rendering the final action (*dedicatio*) no valid dedication. By systematising the information from the above analysis in accordance with Lawson's and McCauley's formal system, and Searle's distinctions as amendments, we arrive at Figure 1.

It can be seen from this figure how Cicero's speech is structured so as to undermine the links to previous enabling ritual actions in a systematic way. It has one purpose: to show that the dedication of Cicero's house never took place. It is quite probable that Clodius and the *pontifex* were doing something resembling a dedication, but it was not a valid dedication. To make his point, Cicero goes through a relatively complex ritual history, with the rules defining and regulating it. Cicero attacks points which are constitutive at every level (q12, q7, q5, q3, and k4), where q12, q7 and q5 are embedded actions. It can be seen that in every ritual at least one constitutive rule is found to have been broken. The really central breaches of constitutive rules seem to be q3, a valid reason for the adoption, and k4, an approval of the consecration by the senate. It seems that precisely the lack of k4 found resonance with the *pontifices*, as this issue is what decided the case to Cicero's advantage. We know this because Cicero mentions the ruling in one of his letters (*att.* 4.2.3.). The decree from the *pontifices* specifies that the dedication had taken place *populi iniussu*, without the people's approval.²⁰ The place was therefore *sine religione*, which means

²⁰ It has to be noted here that it can hardly be due to a violation of the *lex papiria*, which Goar calls the only strong point (1972:52), that Cicero won the case, because that law only concerns the plebs (*Lex papiria vetat aedes iniussu*

Figure 1. Representation of the ritual history in *De domo sua*.

that it was not *sacrum*. Thus the dedication had not taken place because of deficiencies in one of the prior embedded ritual actions.

Cicero did not, however, substantiate that errors at deeper levels, that is, in the adoption and in his tribunate in general, had occurred. More precisely phrased, the *pontifices* did apparently not take the rules infringed as being constitutive, but rather as regulative. The reason for this might very well be that the gods were thought to respond during the adoption ritual or inauguration to the tribunate had a ritual fault been made, an event for which there was precedence. But since no such sign had occurred, there could be nothing wrong with either his adoption or his tribunate.

Conclusion

It can be seen from this analysis that earlier research has misunderstood Cicero's *De domo sua*. The personal attacks on Clodius are part of the style, and probably something most of the senate would agree with anyway. The political comments were just comments, while the ritual history was the core of the speech, as is demonstrated by the final ruling. Instead of being a moralising attack on an opponent, or political manipulation, it is something as simple as a ritual history, or rather a history about something that seemed to be a ritual, but turned out not to be. Cicero's prime objective was to demonstrate that the dedication, which would have changed the properties of his house to *sacra*, had not in fact taken place. This was achieved through pinpointing ritual flaws in previous enabling ritual actions. In so doing, Cicero was making explicit some of the implicit beliefs entailed by the ritual. It turns out that perhaps Cicero was not a hypocrite after all, but a concerned citizen who did not want to bring potential harm to the state by illicit habitation of a divine residence. As was noted

plebis consecrari (dom. 128). This of course is a technicality, but there is a difference between *plebs* and *populus* in republican terminology.

above, the gods were also citizens. So Cicero may still have believed in the sanctity of *Libertas* and in the general efficacy of the *dedicatio* ceremony, while not believing that *Libertas* owned his specific property, because a proper *dedicatio* ceremony had not been performed there. The ritual argument is based on the type of implicit belief identified by Linder and Scheid, and it can be analysed with Lawson's and McCauley's theory because Romans were equipped with the same cognitive system as we are.

The proposed interpretation has served to bring us a small step closer to the thought world of the Romans without reverting to Christianising ideas such as Goar's proposition that moral purity was necessary for ritual efficacy. This has allowed us to see some coherence in an admittedly messy text. The theory of Lawson and McCauley has been helpful in detecting and investigating the structure of Cicero's argument, a structure which has not previously been seen. The final ruling documented in Cicero's letters corroborated this interpretation.

Is there evidence that the Romans did not have any sincere belief in their rituals? Did the Romans manipulate their religion to achieve personal aims? I think not. It seems reasonably clear that Cicero *was* motivated, among other things, by a wish to reacquire his house, and, had he not had this motive, the ritual faults would have gone unnoticed. This does not mean, however, that the Romans did not care for ritual propriety in general. Just as a previously undetected crime is not evidence of an indifferent attitude to justice, a previously undetected ritual fault is not evidence of an indifferent attitude to ritual; actually the conclusion is the exact opposite. So, while previous research has often ignored Roman ritual because it was seen as devoid of sincerity, my conclusion is the exact opposite: that the Romans believed sincerely in rituals and their relation to the gods.

I hope also to have shown that cognitive theories of religion can help shed light on some of the dark points in the history of Roman religion and provide a constructive basis for a reinterpretation of

how ritual and belief are related in Roman religion. This also has some general consequences as Lawson's and McCauley's theory can help us gain a better understanding of strongly ritual religions and cultures without assuming an ethnocentric understanding of belief along the lines of Christian theology.

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RELIGION IN MIND: A REVIEW ARTICLE OF THE COGNITIVE SCIENCE OF RELIGION

JESPER SØRENSEN

Introduction

In recent years, the cognitive approach to the study of culture in general and of religious phenomena in particular has gained increasing support in the academic study of religion. From being an approach championed by few, though important scholars, it now has its own dedicated journal (*Journal of Cognition and Culture*), a dedicated academic institute (Institute of Cognition and Culture, Queen's University Belfast), and soon we will see the emergence of an International Association of the Cognitive Science of Religion (to be inaugurated in Aarhus, January 2006).¹

But what is all the fuss about? What is so attractive about the cognitive approach to religion? Is it really a genuinely new approach that can yield new results and solve persistent problems? Or is it just the most recent academic fad taking over where semiotics, post-structuralism and cultural studies have left off? This paper will argue that cognitive science does in fact present a genuinely new and very promising approach to explaining religious phenomena. By addressing both old and new problems by means of new theories and methods, cognitive science offers an opportunity for the scientific study of religion to break free of the inertia imposed by postmodernist solipsism. Further, the cognitive approach is not a fad. Even though it is a newcomer to the scientific study of

¹ ICC's website: www.qub.ac.uk/icc/. Website for four-year project on Religion, Cognition and Culture at University of Aarhus, Denmark: www.teo.au.dk/en/research/current/cognition. Website for the IACSR: <http://www.iacsr.com/>

religion, cognitive science is an established, cross-disciplinary program with distinctive methodological and theoretical traditions.

In what follows I will first address two basic problems and state some meta-theoretical principles. I will thereafter review work done within two broad areas: the nature of religious concepts and the nature of religious behaviour. Unfortunately (for a reviewer), the field of cognitive science of religion is already vast, addressing numerous problems through a growing number of methods. This means that much important and relevant work has to be omitted and other positions do not get the in-depth treatment they deserve. A regrettable example of omission is the growing literature on the developmental aspects of religion, i.e. how children's cognitive development affects the transmission of both religious concepts and religious practice.² This field deserves its own thorough review as the role of developmental factors has played a far too limited role in traditional theories of religion.

Two Problems and Five Principles

Many of the problems first addressed by the cognitive science of religion have long been recognised in the comparative study of religion: Why do we find religion in all human cultures and why the apparent recurrence of specific religious phenomena? Whether we are going back in history by means of textual and archaeological evidence or roaming the farthest regions of the globe we find religions and equivalent ideas and practices keep appearing: the existence of superhuman agents (e.g. gods, spirits or ancestors, with knowledge about and power over human affairs); narratives of how the world was created by these superhuman agents; evil spirits or witches seeking to harm people by disease or misfortune; the power of religious specialists to deal with both benevolent and

² E.g. Bering (2005); Bering and Björklund (2004); Bering and Shackelford (2004); Kelemen (1999 and 2004); Kelemen and DiYanna (2005); Rosengren et al. (2000).

malevolent superhuman agents; specific types of actions, such as sacrifice or spirit-possession, involving superhuman agents; ideas that a part of a person lives on after the body is dead. These are but a small sample of a possible list of cross-cultural recurrences of religious phenomena.

The questions of (a) the universality of religion and (b) recurrence of religious phenomena have been central to the study of religion ever since its origin in the 19th century, and numerous attempts have been made to answer them. The methods and theories used by the cognitive approach to tackle these questions are, however, rather different, largely as a result of the meta-theoretical principles underlying the formation of specific theories. These meta-theoretical principles can be formulated in five points upon which there is broad agreement in the cognitive science of religion.

First, in order to understand religion we need *explanatory* theories. Even if attempting to understand religious phenomena in their localised cultural and historical context is a laudable endeavour, this cannot be the sole purpose of the scientific study of religion. We need to address the universal questions raised above and this cannot be done by means of localised interpretations. Further, explanatory theories not only enable us to address such general questions but also to fertilise local interpretations by supplying a more solid terminological grounding and presenting new potential lines of enquiry. All interpretations are theory-dependent and the more explicit the theories are, the better. Thus the cognitive science of religion does not reject the role of interpretation in the academic study of religion, but merely attempts to right an unbalance by insisting on the necessity of explanatory theories.³

Second, the concept of religion must be “*refractioned*” into its constitutive parts in order to be amenable to scientific investigation.

³ For a discussion of the relation between interpretation and explanation see Bloch (1998); Jensen (2002); Lawson and McCauley (1990); Pyysiäinen (2004); Sperber (1996).

Earlier attempts to explain religion struggled to find a “magic bullet,” i.e. one theory that would explain all religious phenomena. Whether seeing religion substantively (e.g. as explaining the world) or functionally (e.g. as alleviating anxieties), it was never hard to find empirical counterexamples (e.g. religious concepts that produce more questions than they answer, or religious actions that generate anxiety). Instead, we should recognise the historical and non-scientific origin of the term “religion” — not in order to get rid of it, but in order to recognise that it is a synthetic category that covers a broad range of phenomena. These must all be addressed separately in order to construct explanatory theories and can only subsequently be related in order to investigate their possible mutual relations.⁴

Third, the refraction of religion into its constitutive parts means that religious phenomena can be studied by *methods used to study non-religious phenomena*. Thus, religious concepts are a kind of concept, ritual behaviour is a kind of behaviour, religious group formation is a kind of group formation etc. In investigating what is special, if anything, about religious concepts we need to understand what characterises concepts in general: how they are remembered, transmitted, produced, systematised etc. So, in contrast to calls for a special methodology or hermeneutics of religious studies, the cognitive science of religion places the study of religion within the broader scientific community and emphasises that religious phenomena are underpinned by the same cognitive mechanisms responsible for other types of human phenomena.⁵

Fourth, the cognitive science of religion is concerned with finding the causal *mechanisms* or *processes* underlying visible manifestations of religion. In order to prevent the cross-cultural and

⁴ For a discussion on the refracted concept of religion, see: Atran (2002); Boyer (1996, 2001); Hinde (1999). For critical assessment of older theories see: Boyer (1993a, 2001); Lawson and McCauley (1990).

⁵ Atran (2002); Boyer (1994, 2001); Lawson and McCauley (1990).

comparative study of religious phenomena from becoming a barren and shallow list of observed phenomena, classifications must be grounded in explanatory theories outlining underlying causal processes. This may solve the problem of universality (that some phenomena, even though widespread, are not found everywhere). Only the underlying mechanisms and processes are universal, whereas the emergence of a specific phenomenon at a particular time and place depends on other, contextual factors. By analogy, the possible sound-patterns in human language can be explained by appealing to underlying neural, cognitive and physiological mechanisms. But when appropriating the sounds of a specific language the individual will manifest only some of these possibilities whereas others will become almost impossible to learn at a later stage. Thus, even if mechanisms are universal, phenomena need not be. Further, by addressing the underlying causal mechanisms it becomes possible to construct more refined and consistent scientific classifications. Phenomena now divided into different categories can be seen as products of the same mechanisms, and phenomena grouped together based on superficial similarity will be understood as produced by very different mechanisms.⁶

Fifth, all scholars involved in the cognitive science of religion agree, not surprisingly, that the human cognitive system is a good place to start in order to explain religion, even if there is heated debate concerning whether it is the only causally relevant factor. Religion refers to certain types of behaviour and ideas entertained by people, and the human cognitive system is a necessary (if not sufficient) element in any explanation of religion. As with any other cultural phenomenon, there is *no religion without human cognition*, and it is therefore rather puzzling that the construction of adequate theories of its role has been neglected for so long.

⁶ Boyer (1992, 1994, 2001).

The Cognitive Study of Religious Beliefs

Religious traditions are commonly defined by the beliefs that so-called “believers” purportedly hold. Even if this focus on the conceptual side of religion might represent a distortion and that behaviour is more important than recognised so far, there is no question that specific types of ideas characterise religion. Since Tylor’s famous minimum definition of religion as “the belief in supernatural beings,” most definitions have focused on the fact that religions contain references to special beings that are not part of the natural, empirical world. In line with its focus on underlying mechanisms, the cognitive science of religion has attempted to explain how religious ideas are distinct from other ideas, and how this distinction may affect memory and transmission.

In a series of seminal articles in the 1980s and 1990s, the French anthropologist Dan Sperber framed an approach that focuses on the differential transmission of ideas. This *epidemiology of representations* follows three steps: First, we need to distinguish between public and mental representations in an act of communication. Whereas mental representations are mental states entertained by persons involved in communication, public representations are the externally accessible part of the communication (sounds, pictures, ink on a paper). Sperber argues that no deterministic relation can be found between the public and the mental representation and therefore the meaning of the message cannot be deduced from the public representation. Instead, meaning is constructed through a cognitive process in which a receiver infers a maximum amount of relevant meaning based on minimal input. Second, this constructive process takes place by activating a range of mental mechanisms that produce specific types of inferences when triggered. Thus successful communication uses public representations with the ability to trigger the production of inferences in the receiver’s cognitive system that potentially lead to a mental state more or less similar to that of the sender. Third, as the role of public representations is to activate mental processes, it is feasible to study the cultural suc-

cess of individual representations as a function of their ability to produce relevant inferences in individuals. Thus, representations can be studied as an epidemiological phenomenon, i.e. as the differential spread of specific representations through a population. Representations that trigger our cognitive system are more likely to be remembered and transmitted and will therefore be widely distributed.⁷

Taking the epidemiological approach to the study of religious concepts, anthropologist Pascal Boyer argues that only by understanding our cognitive system will we be able to understand the origin and recurrence of religious phenomena. What traditional scholars of religion are studying are the public representations involved in transmission. Failure to recognise the importance of underlying cognitive processing has led to an over-emphasis on the “exotic” nature of religion. Religions abound with witches acting from a distance, omnipresent gods, and listening statues, but as in the case of other public representation, explicit religious ideas underdetermine the mental representations they give rise to. Thus, receivers will enrich the information given through inferences supplied by specific cognitive devices. Boyer therefore argues that religious representations are a special case of representations that combine explicit *minimally counterintuitive* aspects that are easy to remember with implicit intuitive aspects that are good to reason with.

This distinction between intuitive and counter-intuitive representations is based on meticulous studies in developmental and cross-cultural psychology supporting the hypothesis that human cognitive architecture is “domain-specific.” Thus, instead of an all-purpose mechanism that treats all types of information and problems by means of the same general methods, human cognition is more realistically described as a number of more or less separate mecha-

⁷ The essays on epidemiology of representations are collected in Sperber (1996). The importance of cognitive relevance in a theory of communication is argued in Sperber and Wilson (1995).

nisms dedicated to processing specific types of information. Domain-specific accounts of human cognition support the argument that our implicit understanding of the world is divided into a number of ontological domains. We have specific expectations for individual phenomena because we subsume them into broad ontological domains. When hearing that the invented word “huchit” is an *ANIMAL*, one automatically has a number of expectations: it has a physical body; it is born from other “huchits”; it can move by itself; it will grow old and die, etc. None of this information needs to be made explicit. In a similar way we have intuitive expectations about domains such as *OBJECT*, *ARTEFACT*, *PLANT* and *PERSON*, as this makes our everyday interaction with the world both faster and more predictable. Thus the intuitive ontology is not scientifically based knowledge, but a result of evolutionary developed heuristic devices.⁸

Boyer argues that successful religious concepts are characterised by involving either a breach of domain-specific intuitive inferences or a transfer of a restricted number of inferences from another ontological domain. Representations of ancestors, ghosts and spirits are examples of an ontological breach. All violate the intuitive expectation that a *PERSON* has a physical body and this makes them attention grabbing, if not downright uncanny. All of them, however, retain a large number of intuitive properties. They are expected to perceive the world, to have beliefs, and to act motivated by these beliefs. Thus ancestors, ghosts and spirits can be persuaded, coerced, or tricked. In short, they can be interacted with in a manner that is strikingly similar to how we interact with other human beings. Examples of transfer from another ontological domain are numerous. Just think of statues that hear what they are told or magical medicines addressed vocally. In these cases aspects of agency is transferred to entities ordinarily categorised as not having agency

⁸ The literature on domain-specific cognition is vast, but helpful anthologies including discussions of culture and religion are Hirschfeld and Gelman (1994), and Sperber, Premack and Premack (1995).

(OBJECT, ARTEFACT, and PLANT). In most cases, however, the breach or transfer is minimal and what guides our interactions is almost exclusively based on intuitive assumptions.

This does not mean that people cannot come up with religious concepts not following these rules. It merely means that concepts that are minimally counterintuitive are *cognitively optimal* and therefore, all else being equal, more likely to be successfully transmitted. The theory of minimally counterintuitive religious concepts thus explains the recurrence of specific types of religious concepts in all religious traditions as a result of a selective process. Religious traditions end up as they do because the transmission process effectively weeds out or transforms concepts that are not cognitively optimal.⁹

If being minimally counterintuitive is what characterises religious concepts, what distinguish them from concepts such as Mickey Mouse? Mickey Mouse combines intuitive elements with attention demanding breaches or transfers, but even for the most casual observer Mickey Mouse is not a religious agent. Why is this so? One hypothesis seeks the answer in the role of *agents*. Humans have a well-documented tendency to search for agents in the perceptible environment, whether as faces in the clouds or traces in the sand. But not all agents are equally important. We are especially prone to imagine agents that are either anthropomorphic or have a human-like mind. Even if the gods, spirits and ancestors need not look like us, they always have a mind like us. This is important because representations of another human mind trigger a wealth of possible inferences due to the social nature of *Homo sapiens*. An important part of such social cognition are the so-called “theory of mind” mechanisms that make us see other people as a “mirror image” of our own self: as an agent with (limited) perceptual

⁹ Besides Boyer (1994, 2001, 2002), Pyysiäinen (2001, 2002, 2004) places great emphasis on the counterintuitive aspects of religious concepts. For cross-cultural experimental studies confirming the positive selection of counterintuitive concepts, see Boyer and Ramble (2001).

access to the environment, based on which it forms (potentially flawed) beliefs that motivate actions. We constantly seek out information that will help us understand what other people have perceived, know and believe, because it helps us understand and predict their behaviour.

Two things distinguish religious agents from Mickey Mouse. First, ancestors, spirits and gods are interested in socially relevant information. The gods we interact with the most (the “popular gods”) are those interested in what their “followers” do and think. Second, contrary to ordinary people, superhuman agents have more or less unrestricted access to social strategic information. In contrast to Mickey Mouse, the gods know if we cheat on our spouses or steal from our neighbour, even if no one else does. Because of this they become highly relevant social partners and not just aesthetic figures.¹⁰

A second hypothesis argues that the difference between Mickey Mouse and religious agents lies in their respective meta-representational content. Meta-representations are representations about representations or beliefs about beliefs. Whereas Mickey Mouse has the meta-representation ‘Mickey Mouse is a cartoon figure’ as a background to all other representations, superhuman agents have meta-representations that somehow indicate their reality. Ancestors can for instance be meta-represented in mythical narratives as ‘what we become when we die’ which naturally gives them a different status than Mickey Mouse. But the status of a meta-representation is not self-evident. When religious figures are transformed into characters of cultural legend (as in the case of the Nordic gods) this can be explained as a transformation of the validating meta-representation from that of truth to that of legend. This points

¹⁰ A theory of religion based on the cognitive importance of animism and anthropomorphism was first developed by Guthrie (1993, 2002). The importance of agency detection for religion is further argued by Barrett (2000, 2004). The theory of superhuman agents with unlimited access to strategic information is developed by Boyer (2001).

to the fact that meta-representations are intimately related to structures of authority and, in the case of religion, to religious authority whether found in a holy book, in a religious institution, or in a specific person.¹¹

A third hypothesis focuses on the role of actions in general and ritual actions in particular in validating superhuman agents. In short, Mickey Mouse is not a religious agent because there are no validating actions in which he is represented as interfering with the world. Accordingly the most efficient way of validating the existence of a superhuman agent is creating social situations in which he or she is understood as acting or being acted upon. Testing cases that illustrate this point are concepts such as Santa Claus or the Tooth Fairy. Based on the preceding argument it is predicted that children whose family perform actions involving these agents (bringing presents etc.) will be more likely to ascribe these a validating meta-representation than children from families that do not engage in such practices.¹²

These three hypotheses are potentially complementary. Superhuman agents will typically be socially interested parties with unrestricted access to knowledge; they will be meta-represented as real and important agents; and this meta-representation is most efficiently created through socially orchestrated actions with superhuman agents as either agents or patients.

Religion, Tradition and Conceptual Systems

Some readers might wonder to what extent the mechanisms described above can explain the apparent systematicity of some religions and the historical construction of elaborate theologies. In

¹¹ The role of meta-representations are emphasised by Pyysiäinen (2004) as well as Atran (2002).

¹² The importance of the role of superhuman agency in ritual action is emphasised by Lawson and McCauley (1990) and McCauley and Lawson (2002). The importance of ritual performance in validating belief in specific superhuman agents is argued in Sørensen (2000b, and forthcoming (a)).

short, are religious traditions really nothing but more or less coincidental conglomerates of cognitively optimal concepts or do we find a cultural “ratchet effect” that ensures that religious innovations stabilise and enables the cumulative construction of a religious tradition?¹³

There is no agreement about this question. Some argue that culture in general and religion as a tradition is an epiphenomena that has no causal effect. Supporting this view, psychologist Justin Barrett has demonstrated that, when performing under pressure, people tend to make inferences that are often in sharp contrast to their explicitly held theological convictions, and instead fall back on intuitive ideas. This distinction between explicitly held theological ideas and implicit theological incorrectness highlights the question whether we can understand behaviour by reference to the teachings of religious systems. Alternatively, the formation of religious traditions can be understood as a result of the creation of a guild of religious specialists in specific historical circumstances. In order to create a privileged position, a priestly class must protect itself from competition and ensure control. By streamlining orthodoxy it becomes possible to control access to the group (only people with the right training will be admitted); to distinguish persons legitimately wielding authority (ensuring religious authority); and to control the uniformity of teachings in different geographical areas (policing a larger social group). Accordingly, the formation of religious doctrines has more to do with the cognitive systems underlying the formation of social groups than with the semantic content of the doctrines.¹⁴

Still, two objections can be raised to the argument presented above. First, is the intuitive character of inferences produced under

¹³ Tomasello (1999) uses the term “ratchet-effect” to describe a cultural development that (a) cannot be undone without serious consequences, and (b) leads to cumulative development.

¹⁴ Barrett (1999, 2004). Theological Incorrectness is also discussed in Boyer (2001) and Slone (2004). Boyer (2001) discusses the formation of religious guilds.

stress really an adequate indication of the importance of doctrinal systems? Second, should we really contrast intuitive knowledge with theologically elaborate systems, or should we instead look for the importance of religious traditions in less consistent and more widely distributed cultural conceptual systems?

Addressing the first concern, anthropologist Harvey Whitehouse has emphasised the important role of explicit religious concepts in human behaviour in general and in the ability to acquire new concepts in particular. Even if humans tend to resort to intuitive reasoning when put under pressure, most of the time humans do not reason under cognitive pressure. In contrast they have time to ruminate about religious ideas and think about future lines of action in light of these. Further, as most existing cultural knowledge is distributed between different kinds of people (some are nuclear physicists, others carpenters), people do not acquire new concepts with equal readiness. Even though minimally counterintuitive concepts may form part of the optimal bedrock of religious transmission, acquiring new religious concepts often requires a considerable amount of cognitive effort and a high level of motivation. Based on fieldwork experience in Papua New Guinea and theories of human memory Whitehouse argues that the transmission of such cognitively costly religious ideas will be likely to take one of two forms. In the “doctrinal mode of religiosity” complex religious representations are transmitted through a process of continual ritual repetition that enables the teachings to become part of participants’ semantic memory. Semantic memory terms de-contextualised and explicit schematic knowledge, and Whitehouse argues that the transmission of this kind of religious knowledge has several implications: (a) it is dependent on frequent reiteration and therefore runs the risk of a “tedium-effect” in which people lose motivation due to redundancy and familiarity effects. Methods must be found to counter this tendency; (b) successful transmission of explicit doctrinal ideas is dependent on skilled orators, which in turn strengthens representations of religious leadership; (c) the intimate relation between religious leadership and religious teaching necessitates

frequent “orthodoxy checks” ensuring that believers are adhering to the right doctrine and the creation of adequate centralised bodies to police it; (d) frequent repetition will render memory of ritual performance implicit which in turn enhances the survival potential for the teaching by inhibiting individual interpretation; (e) being based on decontextualised semantic memory, the doctrinal mode facilitates the construction of anonymous religious communities and are easily spread through proselytising.

In the “imagistic mode of religiosity” transmission of religious knowledge exploits more heavily the episodic memory system. Episodic memory is highly context-dependent as it relates to the specific experience of the subject. Whitehouse argues that transmission based on this memory system results in an altogether different religious morphology: (a) episodic memory is activated by infrequent and emotionally arousing ritual performance; (b) this encourages participants to interpret the ritual actions through Spontaneous Exegetical Reflection (SER); (c) no orthodoxy is formed since SER tends to be highly idiosyncratic; (d) due to the emphasis on transmission via group action, dynamic religious leadership based on verbally-transmitted revelatory knowledge is difficult to establish, no orthodoxy checks are needed, and there can be no proselytising; (e) instead of widespread anonymous communities, the high emotional arousal in infrequent rituals effect the creation of small social groups with strong cohesion based on shared experience of highly arousing ritual ordeals.¹⁵

It is important to recognise that Whitehouse does not argue that individual religions belong to either one or the other mode. Rather, the theory of modes of religiosity specifies two attractor positions in cultural transmission each with specific consequences for social morphology. A single religious tradition will most likely contain both, but one or the other may be the prevalent mode of transmit-

¹⁵ The mode of religiosity theory is most systematically explained in Whitehouse (2000, 2004a, and 2004b).

ting religious ideas. The theory merits discussion by scholars of religion, as it not only seeks to explain the transmission of ‘non-optimal’ religious ideas and concepts, but also because it makes predictions about the relation of religious ideas to both social morphology (group size, type of leadership etc.) and to likely historical trajectories.¹⁶

Addressing the question of the relation between intuitive representations and widely distributed concepts highlights the contentious role the concept of “culture” plays in studies of human cognition. Whereas the agenda purported in the epidemiological approach largely regards culture as an epiphenomenon without any causal effect, other writers have been less willing to discard this explanatory level and have instead focused on the intimate interaction between stable conceptual, semiotic and social structures on the one hand and universal cognitive abilities on the other. Sørensen has named this project an “immunology of cultural systems” supplementing the epidemiological project with an attempt to describe how pre-established conceptual models impose a selective pressure on the distribution of novel concepts. Thus, cognitive systems and pragmatic encounters are not sufficient to explain why some counter-intuitive representations are culturally successful (i.e. are widely distributed) where others fail.¹⁷

While the general discussion of the relation between culture and cognition is rather extensive — incorporating anthropology, linguistics and psychology — the application of this to the study of religious concepts has been more limited. Taking inspiration from linguistic studies of categorisation, metaphor and conceptual blending, some scholars have focused on the importance of underlying schematic

¹⁶ The theory of modes of religiosity has been subjected to criticisms and elaborations in numerous publications: in relation to anthropology: *Journal of Ritual Studies* 16(2), Whitehouse and Laidlaw (2004); in relation to history: Alles (2004), Ketola (2004), Paden (2004), Vial (2004), Whitehouse and Martin (2004), Wiebe (2004); and in relation to cognitive science: Whitehouse and McCauley (2005).

¹⁷ Sørensen (2004).

structures in a cultural conceptual systems, and how individual concepts are “embedded” in larger theory-like conceptual domains. It is argued that the meaning of concepts is not only defined by the intuitive inferences it generates but also by its, often hierarchical, relationship to other concepts. Thus the existing ecology of ideas in a given population will itself attain a degree of stability. Nor should religious concepts only be seen in relation to other religious concepts or explicit theological systems. Religious concepts form part of much larger and relatively stable clusters of mutually reinforcing concepts with basic schemata that inform a wide variety of concepts and behaviours. Thus the concept of sin in the Western world is not only defined relative to a Christian theological doctrine known to a select few, but permeates other cultural domains such as theatre, literature and the visual arts and forms part of ordinary everyday language. Further, specific concepts (e.g. sin, repentance, and redemption) are combined in stable narratives that not only structure religious myths but also supply a skeleton structure to organising and giving meaning to individual experience. Thus long-term autobiographical memory will tend to be presented through already existing narrative structures even though it is doubtful that memory itself is stored in a narrative format.¹⁸

When relating religion to overall conceptual structures, the role of basic schemas and entrenched conceptual mappings becomes highly relevant. Based on theories of conceptual metaphor developed by Lakoff and Johnson, some scholars have argued that it is possible to extract the fundamental conceptual structures that inform reasoning and religious innovation in a given cultural context. Religious

¹⁸ On the relation between cognition and culture defending the latter as an explanatory level see Jensen (2002). On religious concepts forming an ecology of representations, see Malley (1995, 1997). On the understanding of religious concepts as complex concepts related to cosmological ideas see Keller and Lehman (1993). On the relation between Long Term Memory and narrative structure see Bloch (1998). On narratives mediating between culture and cognition, see Jensen (2002) and Sørensen (2004).

conceptualisation is creative in its frequent blending of different ontological and conceptual domains, but the viability of newly constructed concepts seems to be strongly dependent on the degree to which it is adaptable to already entrenched conceptual metaphors and widely spread cultural schemas. Thus people understand new concepts in light of already existing conceptual structure. These basic metaphors and schemas are *sensitive* to cultural differences, but it should be emphasised that this is not a defence for cultural relativism. Our conceptual system is constrained by our bodily interaction with the surrounding environment. Thus, it is almost certain that individuals in all cultures have a cognitive schema of CONTAINMENT and it is very likely that such a basic schema is widely used to represent spatial relations both literally and metaphorically. The extent of such use will, however, vary considerably. While cultural conceptual systems vary, they are formed on the same basis using the same cognitive principles.¹⁹

So even if most scholars in the cognitive science of religion agree that the transmission of religious ideas is subject to a process of selection based on cognitive mechanism, there is disagreement about (a) the role of more systematised structures of religious concepts in the transmission ideas, (b) the impact on actual behaviour, and (c) the formation of social structures. One of the goals of the cognitive science of religion is to develop precise hypotheses that can be tested and thereby, hopefully, develop a more precise understanding of the relation between individual cognitive processes, the formation of cultural patterns of concepts and behaviour, and social structure.

¹⁹ On metaphor theory see Johnson (1987); Lakoff (1987); Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Application of metaphor and schema theory to the study of religion: Hanks (1990); Keesing (1993); Sørensen (2000a, 2000b, 2002), and forthcoming (a). The relation between the different cognitive approaches discussed is contentious. See Geertz (2004) for a discussion.

The Cognitive Study of Religious Behaviour

One might argue that the preceding argument has an intellectualist flavour. Is religion really all about ideas and not about actions and behaviour? When considering religious behaviour one must ask how it is possible to distinguish religious from non-religious behaviour. Is it behaviour that is explicitly or implicitly motivated by religious beliefs? Is it behaviour that somehow involves religious concepts, such as gods, spirits or ancestors? Or is there really no such thing as religious behaviour, but only behaviour that sometimes is coincidental with religious concepts?²⁰ These questions have been far from answered by the cognitive science of religion, and investigating these questions seems to be recalcitrant to traditional experimental methods. Further, there is a growing realisation that different types of behaviour have different cognitive underpinnings and effects and therefore must be explained by different theories. This work has barely begun, but in order to restrict the discussion, I shall discuss only recent cognitive theories of ritual. This is because ritual is a prototypical case of what is traditionally understood as religious behaviour and because several theories have been developed in order to explain this elusive phenomenon.

One of the first and most influential theories of ritual is the Ritual Form Hypothesis developed by Tom Lawson and Robert McCauley. Inspired by Chomsky's transformational grammar, Lawson and McCauley argue that in order to understand the surface phenomena of actual ritual performance we need to unearth the "deep structures" that generate the rules on which performance is based. In the same way as grammar unconsciously structures language performance (we all speak a language without conscious knowledge of the grammatical rules), so will unconscious rules structure the performance of ritual action. People have a tacit "ritual competence" that guides the performance and evaluation of ritual per-

²⁰ See Bering (2004) for a discussion of the importance of religious concepts in explaining behaviour.

formance. This, however, is not a competence developed for the sake of performing ritual actions. First, Lawson and McCauley defend a stipulative definition of *religious* rituals as actions involving representations of more or less active participation of superhuman agents. Thus the theory does not say anything about the category of ritual in general. Second, the competence involved in performing and evaluating religious rituals is not just concerned with religious ritual, but is based on cognitive structures used to guide the performance and evaluation of actions in general. In line with theories of religious concepts, no special cognitive domain is postulated to explain religious ritual. Rather, ordinary cognitive architecture (the Action Representation System) is mobilised and constrains the form of religious ritual. In short, the Action Representation System ensures that humans have specific expectations to a number of structural roles whenever they understand an event or happening as an action. In its most simple form, these roles include an agent, and action and a patient. When processing information as an action we will automatically look for *who* is acting, *how* he/she is acting, and *on what* or *on whom* the action is performed. In religious ritual a superhuman agent will in varying degrees of proximity fill the role of either agent or patient. Either the ancestors, spirits or gods are seen as acting in the ritual (e.g. baptism), or the ritual is enacting upon them (e.g. sacrifice).²¹

Ritual action faces the peculiar problem that its purported effect is often not perceptible. Therefore, participants will judge its efficacy by its “well-formedness,” i.e. the extent to which it conforms to generative rules, and by relating it to embedded ritual actions. Thus, a priest can perform the act of baptism only by virtue of being ordained, and the bread in communion can infuse a state of grace in the communicant only due to the preceding rite of transubstantiation, which, in turn, depends on being performed by

²¹ The Ritual Form Hypothesis is presented in Lawson and McCauley (1990, 2002); McCauley (2001); McCauley and Lawson (2002).

an ordained priest. In both cases some element in the ritual has a special quality due to its role as a patient in an embedded ritual. This embedded structure, in which one ritual action is buttressed by another, stops with a ritual presumably performed by the superhuman agents themselves. In this manner, ritual performance is ultimately related to conceptual structures that halt the potential infinite regress involved in the search for legitimacy in prior ritual.

By focussing on the role of superhuman agents in the structural description of the ritual, i.e. whether it is the agent or the patient of the ritual action, it becomes possible to explain a number of facts. Lawson and McCauley argue that rituals with a superhuman agent acting are not repeated, can be reversed, and involve relatively higher levels of sensory pageantry (more pomp and circumstance). In contrast, when the superhuman agent is the patient, the ritual can be repeated, cannot be reversed, and will involve less sensory pageantry. So, baptism is performed only once, can be reversed (excommunication), and involves more sensory pageantry than other rituals in the same tradition. In contrast, the act of communion can be repeated, cannot be reversed, and will involve less sensory pageantry. The Ritual Form Hypothesis aims to explain some of the same phenomena as Whitehouse's Modes of Religiosity and this has spurred a debate between the two parties.²²

Whereas the Lawson and McCauley argument is built on a minimal difference between religious ritual action and ordinary action, other scholars are convinced that ritual behaviour has more distinguishing characteristics. Following ethological and anthropological theories of "ritualisation," several scholars argue that ritualised behaviour is distinct from ordinary behaviour on a number of points. First, the actions performed in the ritual are stipulated rather than specified by the intentions of the participants. The reason an agent performs a ritual does not determine the form of the ritual performed. The form of the ritual can instead be understood as

²² See McCauley and Lawson (2002), and Whitehouse (2004a:Ch. 8).

defined by the intentions of another, possibly superhuman agent. Second, there are no intuitive causal representations of how the actions performed in the ritual have their purported effect. Instead focus goes to either the perceptual features found in the ritual action (e.g. relations of similarity and contagion) or to established symbolic interpretations establishing such a connection. Again, the presence of superhuman agents solves a problem, namely why the ritual works. Thus rituals are actions removed from their instrumental domain, which result in specific cognitive responses aimed to relate the actions to intentional agents and to represent their causal efficacy.²³

Boyer and Lienard make a further investigation into the cognitive mechanisms triggered by the performance of ritual. They observe that a number of common characteristics are present in pathological ritualisation found in patients suffering from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, in children's spontaneous ritualisation of everyday behaviour (e.g. bedtime rituals), in adults' preoccupations and specific behaviours appearing at particular life-stages, and in cultural ritual, including religious rituals. These characteristics include a compulsion to perform the action, an extreme focus on action details and adherence to rigidity of script, redundancy and iteration, goal-demotion where actions are devoid of any obvious instrumental effect, and a restricted number of recurrent themes, such as intrusion/protection, contamination/purification and danger/security.

To explain these commonalities, they claim that ritualised actions found in all the domains are the result of an interaction of two neuro-cognitive structures. The first is a Precaution System whose evolutionary role is to infer potential threats to fitness from specific cues

²³ On how ritual actions provoke a search for meaning, see Sperber (1975). The relation between ritual actions and representations of intentionality is discussed in Boyer (1994), Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994), and Whitehouse (2004a). On the relation between ritualisation and representations of ritual efficacy, see Sørensen (forthcoming (b)).

in the environment (e.g. smell indicates possible risk of contamination) and a repertoire of corresponding actions (e.g. avoidance/cleansing). Humans are thus hardwired to detect specific cues in the environment as a sign of potential danger and we have an innate repertoire of atavistic action-sequences aimed at reducing potential danger. The second system deals with parsing of actions into meaningful parts. Ordinary actions are parsed into sequences to which goals can be ascribed and where actions become more or less automatic (as in ordinary actions, such as getting dressed). Ritualised actions, by contrast, parse actions at the lower level of gesture (specific behavioural patterns), which entail that no direct goal can be ascribed and the action cannot be automatised. The performance of long sequences of gestures swamps the working memory and this will, for a time, reduce access to obsessive or intrusive thoughts produced by the activation of the Precaution System. At such a psychological level, ritualised action “works.” Ironically, however, in the longer perspective the very performance of such ritualised action will make the feeling of potential risks even more salient, and as such the short term remedy, ritualised actions, will make future activation of the Precaution System more likely.

Some might argue that even if this is a promising model to explain pathological ritualisation found in patients suffering from OCD, it is a long way from explaining cultural rituals. The model, however, does not suggest that cultural rituals are pathological, nor that it is all there is to say about them. It merely argues that successful cultural rituals, i.e. rituals that are transmitted successfully, are scripted social action-sequences acquired through social exchange, that mimic the potential hazards and atavistic action-sequences triggering the Precaution System. The existence of specific types of cultural ritual is thus a result of a selection process in the same way as religious concepts.²⁴

²⁴ Boyer and Lienhard (forthcoming) and Lienhard and Boyer (under review). See also Boyer (2001).

Some of the outstanding questions about ritual that need to be addressed by the cognitive science of religion is why certain types of activities, and not others, are related to ritual actions and to what extent the performance of ritual alters people's understanding of these activities. Even though there have been preliminary attempts to answer these questions, much more work has to be done.²⁵

Concluding Remarks

When presenting cognitive theories and hypotheses to scholars (and students) of religion a common reaction is the reasonable question: how can cognitive theories help me when dealing with concrete historical data? This is a complicated question that cannot be adequately dealt with in these concluding remarks.²⁶ In a more programmatic fashion, however, a few points arguing for the fundamental relevance of cognitive science for historical studies can be presented:

- Historical research is generally based on explicit public representations (text etc.). Theories that persuasively argue that public representations are only one side of the coin must therefore be taken seriously. Keeping universal cognitive mechanisms in mind can help historians avoid historical exoticism, in the same way as it helps anthropologists avoid cultural exoticism.
- Historical events involve acting subjects with cognitive systems. Knowledge of the constraints and mechanisms imposed by such systems can therefore help historians understand historical events.
- The cognitive science of religion attempts to construct universally valid explanatory theories of religious phenomena. Understanding

²⁵ Boyer (2001) and Pyysiäinen (2004) both address the relation between the performance of ritual action and change of social status.

²⁶ For a more thorough discussion see Martin (2004a, 2004b). For the application of cognitive theories to explain historical phenomena see Lisdorf (2004); Sjöblom (2000); Whitehouse and Martin (2004).

what constitutes religious concepts and religious behaviour can help historians construct their object of study. It is preferable that the construction of objects of study is performed by means of explicit rather than implicit theories.

- Cognitive theorising attempts to construct a precise scientific classification based on underlying causal principles. This will help creating more precise historical (and ethnographic) descriptions as well as facilitate comparative historiography.
- Precise and universally applicable theories of religious phenomena can help historians look for material that is not immediately accessible. Further, it will make it possible to systematise historical material in new ways.

Finally, it should also be emphasised that the scientific study of religion is much more than a historical study. As a discipline it addresses religion and religious phenomena wherever we find them and through numerous methods. In all cases, however, humans are involved and knowledge of how human psychology constrains the formation of religious phenomena is therefore a necessity for understanding such phenomena. Thus a conservative assessment of the role of the cognitive science of religion points to its role in resuscitating the psychology of religion and will result in adequate explanations of the role of psychology in the generation of religious phenomena. A less conservative assessment will see the cognitive science of religion as much more revolutionary by changing both the questions we pose and the methods we use to answer them.

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OBITUARIES

ANDRÉ CAQUOT

(24 April 1923–31 August 2004)

We are sad to announce the death of André Caquot, an honorary life member of the IAHR.

Born in Epinal, André Caquot graduated from the École Normale Supérieure in 1948, subsequently spending time at the Institut français archéologique in Beirut (1949–52) and as a member of the Mission archéologique française in Ethiopia (1953–55). He returned to the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris to take up a teaching post (1955–56) before moving on to Strasbourg (Faculté protestante) to a post in comparative Semitic religions (1957–60), and subsequently back to Paris, teaching Hebrew and Israelite religion at the Sorbonne (1964–68). In 1972 he was appointed to the chair of Hebrew and Aramaic at the Collège de France, where he remained until his retirement in 1994.

He was an active member of several learned societies (the Société Asiatique, the Société des Études Juives, the Société des Études Renaniennes, and the Société Française d'Histoire des Religions), holding offices in all, and becoming a member of the Institut de France (Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres) in 1977. He was also the recipient of several honours: Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, Commandeur de l'Ordre national du Mérite, Commandeur de l'Ordre des Palmes académiques and Chevalier de l'Étoile d'Éthiopie.

Caquot's publications spanned fifty-four years, ranging from the regular presentation of new Aramaic texts in *Syria* to a number of papers in *Annales d'Éthiopie* and *RHPR*, and discussions of the Deir Alla inscriptions, Qumran matters, and a number of thorny Ugaritic

problems in various publications. He was a major contributor (collaborating with Sznycer, Herdner, de Tarragon and Cunchillos) to the two volumes of *Textes ougaritiques*, published by Cerf in 1974 and 1989. These remain important reference material for the translator of the Ugaritic texts. He also contributed to the History of Religions section of the *Encyclopédie de la Pléiade* (1970–72) and collaborated in the translation of Psalms and the 1 and 2 Samuel in the *Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible* (1996). His broad philological skills and intimate knowledge of a number of Semitic languages and epigraphy enabled him to offer nuanced and perceptive interpretations of many cruxes across the range of materials covered by his publications.

NICHOLAS WYATT

MANUEL MARZAL

Manuel Marzal, honorary life member of the IAHR, died in Lima on July 16, 2005. Our association has lost one of his most respected academics. He was born Spain in 1931. At the age of twenty he left for Peru, the place where he lived the largest part of his life and where he developed his academic career. He completed his doctorate in philosophy in Ecuador in 1964; he also studied theology at the Instituto Teológico de Jesuitas in Mexico, and obtained an M.A. in social anthropology at the Universidad Ibero-Americana of Mexico in 1968. It is precisely in the field of anthropology, and specifically in the anthropology of religion, that he developed his teaching and research work, from 1968 in the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Perú (Lima), and in the last five years of his life, successfully creating in Lima the Jesuit University Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, of which he became the first president.

In his research trajectory we can highlight his ethnographic task, centered around the study of the religion of the peasant communities in Peru and the migrants from the rural areas to Lima (*El mundo religioso de Urcos*, Cusco 1971; *Estudios de religión campesina*, Lima 1977; *Los caminos religiosos de los inmigrantes de*

la Gran Lima, Lima 1988). Sensitive to the values of religious change, so essential in Latin America, he dedicated different works of synthesis to these processes (*La transformación religiosa peruana*, Lima 1983; *El sincretismo iberoamericano*, Lima 1985), which he resumed, from the global perspective of an academic career at its height, in his book *Tierra encantada. Tratado de antropología religiosa de América Latina* (Madrid-Lima 2002). A project to which he dedicated his efforts in the last years was the consolidation of the EIR (*Enciclopedia Iberoamericana de Religiones*, Madrid, 2002–), in whose academic committee he was one of the most active members and where he was he editor of the fourth volume on Andean religions (*Religiones andinas*, Madrid 2005), which he saw published only two months before his death.

A great anthropologist and a very intelligent person disappears with Marzal, but also a scholar who did not show disdain for general analyses and for the use of the comparative method in trying to understand the complexity of religions in their diversity and similarities, an intellectual profile and an ambition which seems to be a distinctive stamp of the IAHR since its foundation.

FRANCISCO DIEZ DE VELASCO

BOOK REVIEWS

PHILIP JENKINS, *Dream Catchers. How Mainstream America Discovered Native Spirituality* — New York: Oxford University Press 2004 (xii + 306 p.) ISBN 0195161157 US\$ 28,00.

This book is not about Native American spirituality. Philip Jenkins, who is Distinguished Professor of History and Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University, produced a book on the way the image of Native American spirituality changed dramatically in the last 150 years. He describes and analyzes the complex historical process in which Native American spirituality became part of mainstream American culture. His story begins in the Nineteenth century. Artists and anthropologists had just discovered that Native Americans possess some attractive cultural traits that could be called religious. These observers formed a minority, for most white Americans still abhorred the savage ways of Native Americans. A 180-degree shift has taken place. Nowadays, Native American spirituality is warmly endorsed in mainstream America. Jenkins makes clear how and why for mainstream Americans Native American spirituality evolved from 'devil-worship' into a highly regarded religious tradition. Popular images of Native American Indians went from revulsion to reverence in a history in which many competing actors pursued varied goals. Jenkins presents this history with an enormous range of facts, but his description and analysis remain lucid.

One of the interesting points of the book is the way Jenkins treats the debate on New Age appropriation of Native American spirituality. In contemporary America, it is found everywhere. It is manifested in sweat lodges, dream catchers, talking sticks, medicine circles, shamanovels, and many other commodities, practices and ideas. As part of the consumer culture it is offered in workshops, books, lectures and rituals for anyone who wants to pay for it. For some, Native American spirituality possesses an ancient, authentic and pure wisdom. Others like to ridicule this assumption. These critics claim that this 'tribe of wannabe' is just 'playing

Indian'. Commentators like to debunk their religious and/or spiritual claims, and state that it is just silly play-acting, based on an erroneous modern romantic construction. Several Native American organizations and spokespersons launch venomous attacks on the spiritual entrepreneurs who call themselves shamans or medicine men and make money in this field of Native American spirituality. They accuse them of new colonialism, exploitation, or disrespectful blasphemy. Critics use epithets like plastic medicine men, New Age frauds, cultural thieves, exploiters, white shamans, shame-ons, New Age morons, and cultural thieves. Evidently, the authenticity and validity of this movement of dream catchers is easily degraded.

Philip Jenkins does not want to accuse or defame. He takes another, more interesting standpoint. He admits that he can not deny that the movement is 'newly minted', or that the history of the movement may contain 'elements of deceit'. And Jenkins is not uncritical of the romanization of Native American Indians, especially because of the unequal power relations between the appropriators and the appropriated. But he avoids judgements about the validity and theological truth of the ideas and practices. For him, other more fundamental issues are important. By telling the history of the changing mainstream attitudes toward Native spirituality, he shows how the understanding of religion itself has dramatically changed. And this is one of the important aspects of the story he narrates; what counts as religion is continually debated, defined, challenged and disputed. In this way, the book urges the reader to think about the meaning and use of the word religion. Jenkins demonstrates that labelling is a powerful value judgement. It makes a huge difference if a cultural practice is called religion or superstition. In a certain way, those who depict the New Age appropriation of Native American spirituality as aberrant, follow the same routine as those who, 150 years earlier, depicted Native Americans as devil worshippers. In a concluding chapter Jenkins explains his own thoughts on what constitutes a religion. For him, a real religion is one that people are prepared to treat as such.

Finally, the book is worthwhile because it comprises a fascinating assortment of different intriguing characters and anecdotes. Carlos Castaneda, Pocahontas, Rolling Thunder, Joseph Campbell, Helena Blavatsky, Hiawatha,

Richard Nixon, Aldous Huxley, D.H. Lawrence, Mircea Eliade, and many others play interesting roles in this impressive book.

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JEROEN BOEKHOVEN

LEIF CARLSSON, *Round Trips to Heaven, Otherworldly Travelers in Early Judaism and Christianity*, Lund: Lund Studies in History of Religions 2004 (398 p.), ISBN 91-02106-X.

Leif Carlsson's book deals with the subject of heavenly journeys as narrated in a set of captivating Jewish and early Christian texts, namely (in approximately chronological order): *1 Enoch*, *2 Enoch*, the *Testament of Levi*, the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, Paul's 2 Corinthians 12,1-5, the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, the *Life of Adam and Eve*, and *3 Baruch* whose long and precise study ends the book. All of these texts share the same difficulties about their respective origin: they display both Jewish and Christian elements, and it is not easy to place any of these texts within a particular historical context.

In the introduction (Background and Method), the author exposes how the motif of heavenly journeys has already been handled until now. According to Carlsson, the heavenly journey is more than a mere motif: it constitutes a textual genre which has specific functions. The author studies the texts in a historico-critical way, by relating them to their historical and social framework, and by trying to reconstitute the function of these texts in their contexts. The introduction gives a good general view of the matter to be dealt with in the following pages. However, some statements about heavenly journeys in traditions other than in early Christianity and Judaism, as well as a justification of the contexts chosen (why Jewish and Christian texts instead of Jewish and Greco-Roman texts, for example) would have been here useful.

The author points out that providing a group an identity is frequently a major function of a heavenly journey. He shows that there is interplay between identity (how a person sees himself), legitimacy (how a person

is acknowledged by a group) and what he calls the "Tradition Group." This latter concept of "Tradition Group" can raise some questions : while it is self-evident that every text has a social and historical background, it is perhaps not so obvious that a given text was actually used by a "Tradition Group" with a particular aim. Indeed, a text may have been used by many groups (and interpreted in many different ways), or it may have been used by no group at all (for example, it is often hard to discern a particular function behind some poetic texts). To look for a specific function behind a text could also drive the study towards the question of the text's origins which, for the texts being studied, can hardly be answered. Nevertheless, the author is well conscious of these problems, as he expresses that "it is next to impossible to reconstruct a possible wholly original text" (28), and that "every version should be looked upon as a new text" (ibid.).

For all the texts that he examines, the author provides a quasi exhaustive report about all existing studies. He remarkably exposes the theories and debates concerning the history and the composition of the texts. He shows that two main functions of the heavenly journeys texts can be pointed out, namely: identity providing and death informing (188).

The author begins his study with *1 Enoch*. The text of 14,8 to 16,3 is clearly related to the priesthood: the description of the heavenly space is patterned after the Temple in Jerusalem. Enoch has the role of a priest, or of the high priest. He is, moreover, allowed to enter God's presence. The author maintains that although Enoch is appointed as a priest, the Tradition Group had no priestly function, but merely had to pass on traditions about Enoch. This could indicate that the text was composed during a crisis with the priesthood in Jerusalem. In replacement of the earthly temple, the text provides a heavenly temple. A second heavenly journey is described in *1 Enoch* 70,1–71,17, with a different function. While *1 Enoch* 14,8–16,3 has an identity-providing function for the group, the second journey informs the reader about what happens after the righteous has died. The author shows that the second journey could be related to a more resigned attitude which did not try anymore to polemize against opposed groups, but looked for a solution in the eschatology.

In the *Testament of Levi*, like in *1 Enoch*, the cosmology is designed according to the Temple. The focus here is on Levi, whose supporters probably considered themselves to be his heirs. The link to Levi could

have been used to reaffirm the legitimacy of members of the group to do service in the Temple.

The *Apocalypse of Abraham* depicts the travel of Abraham through seven heavens as well as his encounter with God himself. Abraham is said to have more authority than Azazel (the devil). This could relate to the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, and to the necessity to manage the catastrophe. The text distinguishes three groups: those who follow Abraham (the “Tradition Group”), and two “evil” groups: those from among Abraham’s relatives having fallen away, and those from the rest of mankind, to be identified with those having taken part in the destruction of the Temple. The text could have Gnostic elements (141).

In the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, the heavenly journey describes what happens after the death. Since Jerusalem is represented in the heavens, it is probable that the text addresses all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, without any further distinction. The text may have been written in reaction to two groups: those progressively abandoning the Jewish faith (influenced by Hellenistic ideas), and those attracted by Judaism and considering a conversion.

The text of 2 Corinthians 12,1–5 mentions a short report of a heavenly journey taken by Paul himself. Even if the heavenly journey meant little for Paul, it was probably of some importance for Paul’s opponents in Corinth, who recognized a heavenly journey as the proof of validity for an apostle. Here, the author makes an interesting connection to a Talmudic text which has much importance in early Jewish mysticism (for which, unfortunately, he does not give the exact reference, 177), where a similar journey is related about Ben ‘Azzai, Ben Zoma, R. Acher and R. ‘Aqiva. In his opinion (186–191), however, the text has more to do with the legitimization of the status of the apostle through a heavenly journey (the author suggests that Paul would tend to agree with his opponents’ advice that a heavenly journey performatively gives an apostolic authority), than with early Jewish mysticism.

The *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, a Christian text, presents a rather complex cosmology with seven heavens. Isaiah travels to heaven, and can hear God (but does not see Him). The prophet, while in heaven, has the vision of Jesus descending on Earth. From the text’s description that Jesus will only appear to the people, when he will have descended on earth, we could infer that this text is related to docetism. The author

believes that everyone in the group could take heavenly journeys, similar to those taken by Isaiah and Jesus, which gave them precedence in comparison to other Christian groups.

In the *Life of Adam and Eve*, which exists in many versions (the author examines the Latin and Greek versions), the journey of Adam to heaven is described. In the Latin version, the elevated position conferred to Adam is passed on to Seth. It is clearly an identity-providing journey, with an intermediary (Seth) between the group and the first traveler (Adam). The Greek version depicts what has happened after Adam's death. His soul is taken to the Paradise, situated in the third heaven.

Finally, *3 Baruch*, an apocalyptic text, presents a "paradigm" of death: it shows where the persons go after the death, waiting for the final judgment. The text could have been written in the context of a crisis, implying renunciation to the earthly goods and values. As the author states it, "instead of a possible worldly future renewal of Jerusalem and the temple for the Jews, the focus is directed towards the status of all people after death" (302). This could refer to a universal form of Judaism, based on general moral principles. In this study of *3 Baruch*, some links to the Jewish rabbinical tradition could have been valuable (e.g. the Talmudic text of Chagigah 12b, which presents a very similar cosmology).

As a conclusion, the author makes an interesting comparative work between all the texts, showing their respective functional and formal similarities and differences. Also the graphic schemas (263–269) are helpful to have a clear view of these complex texts. A bit strangely, the conclusion comes before the study of *3 Baruch*, an important text whose study raises questions and results which could have been meaningful in the conclusion.

In summary, the book provides a good detailed study of some very complex texts, written in many languages (Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Slavonic . . .), and dealing with the fascinating topic of heavenly journeys. The author coped very well with the difficulties related to the composition of the texts and clearly explains all the past work already done on these texts. The idea of pointing out the function of the texts by relating them to the socio-cultural context is well handled (although one could question the very fact that a text always has a function to be discovered). The analysis itself is rigorous and interesting, succeeding in linking the particular study of a text with theoretical statements. However, one could have expected more references to rabbinic apocalyptic texts. Finally,

some comparative and contrastive examples from other traditions (outside the Judeo-Christian context) could have been useful in order to get a wider view of the heavenly journey theme.

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PHILIPPE BORNET

EVE MULLEN, *The American Occupation of Tibetan Buddhism: Tibetans and their American Hosts in New York City* — Münster, New York, München, Berlin: Waxmann, 2001 (Jugend — Religion — Unterricht. Band 6.) ISBN 3-8309-1053-3; ISSN 1430-2667.

In the series of recent publications which are criticizing the Western tendency to idealize Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism as “Shangri-la,” this book is a contribution of special importance. Starting from a solid methodological basis prepared in publications by Anthony Giddens on *Identity Formation in late Modernity*, R. Stephen Warner on *The Structure of American Religiosity*, and Margaret Nowak on *Tibetans in Indian Exile*, it presents a field study into recent changes in the interaction between exile Tibetan Buddhist lay people and monks in New York City.

In traditional Tibetan culture, these relations between lay people and monastics were being characterized by frequent contacts and mutual interdependence. On the one hand, the laypeople needed religious education as well as everyday rituals and prayers executed by monks and nuns. On the other hand, the monasteries and nunneries had to be entertained materially by the laypeople's gifts. The Tibetans of New York, however, practicing Buddhists most of them, are missing the presence and the active help of their lamas nearly all the time. Instead, the New York lamas are full-time engaged in the seven Tibetan Buddhist meditation centers in New York City which, however, are frequented nearly exclusively by non-Tibetans (45f). It is this rather disillusioning fact which Mullen calls the “American occupation of Tibetan Buddhism.”

The reasons for this “occupation” are described clearly and convincingly by Mullen in Chapter 2. Since the material struggle for survival in New York is equally hard for Tibetan monks as for laypeople, the monks are forced to work most of their time for their western disciples gathering in the meditation centres. Because of the same reason, the meditation centres themselves have to look for new sponsors among the wealthier population most of whom are white. The success of a meditation center is being measured by its financial income to which any Tibetans even if interested in the events and classes would not be able to contribute enough. The programs of the meditation centers as well as the books they are selling are aiming at the spiritual interests of white Americans exclusively, centering on Buddhism as an alternative, self-help oriented psychotherapeutic method (52ff.), while the ethnic Tibetans of New York are neither present nor interested. “Through the simple workings of capitalist-oriented organizational assumptions within the existing Tibetan cultural and Buddhist-related institutions,” Mullen states, “Tibetans become excluded” (50). The fact that many Americans tend to overemphasize their devotion to their Tibetan lamas in a way Tibetan laypeople consider “damaging to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition as a whole” (55) adds to their disinterest in visiting the Western-dominated meditation centers. As Chapter 4 shows, this ethnic Tibetan disinterest and disapproval is extended to other Tibet activities in America and NYC, for instance charity dinners for Tibetan freedom, American Tibet films like *Kundun* or *Little Buddha* or the activities in Tibet House run by Robert F. Thurman, who even as a professor of Tibetology is known as one of the most influential and successful idealizers of Tibet. Mullen shows how the “Orientalist” image of Tibet in many American minds forms the basis for the alienation of the New York City Tibet activities from the real, living Tibetans among them.

In Chapters 3 and 5, Mullen centers on the Inner-Tibetan religious innovation made necessary by this situation in order to maintain the Tibetan political and religious identity: As a consequence of being cut off from their own Buddhist teachers, the Tibetan lay community of NYC reacted by becoming “religiously self-reliant” (63). They are actively organizing the few traditional annual Tibetan festivals time and money are allowing them and taking care of the education the children in the Tibetan way. The one and only Tibetan monk who spends his time exclusively serving the Tibetan ethnic community of New York is mainly working in the latter

field. One of the most important motivations for the Tibetans of New York for keeping and developing their Tibetan identity is the peaceful movement for the liberation of Tibet led by the present Dalai Lama. In his person as well as in their own lay Buddhist practice, they see hope for the future existence of the Tibetan nation. Thus, the religious and political self-responsibility had the effect that, in spite of what one could expect, the factual separation of the Tibetan monastics from the ethnic Tibetan laity in NYC did not damage, but even strengthen the sense of national and religious identity among Tibetan transnationals in America.

However, Mullen's book leaves the reader feeling somewhat uneasy. Even those who are neither living in New York nor practising Tibetan Buddhism may begin to consider if it really can be true that, given all the Western charity towards Tibetan refugees and political opposition against Chinese occupation of Tibet, Western intellectuals are in fact themselves *participating* in this occupation, even if on another, viz. the spiritual level. Another point of concern is certainly the question why the lamas in question *do* let themselves be "occupied," somehow ignoring their spiritual duties towards the Tibetan laity they are expected to feel but obviously don't, as some Tibetan lay critics of New York observe (69ff.). All these are newly raised issues being described by Mullen for the first time in clarity and stringency. Eve Mullen's book is an important contribution to the field of religious change and intercultural encounter. All those interested in either questions of religious change or in Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, whether as practitioners, scholars or interested lay people, should take notice of its results.

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ADELHEID HERRMANN-PFANDT

GILLES CHUYEN, *Who is a Brahmin? The Politics of Identity in India*. New Delhi: Manohar, Centre de Sciences Humaines 2004 (294 p.) ISBN 81-7304-603-4 US\$ 20.75.

Since the 1980s there has been in India a perceptible constant growth in the politicization of the caste system. One of its most important manifestations has been the measures taken by the Indian government to support

the emancipation of the middle and lower castes through positive discrimination. This process, which has changed the political landscape of India tremendously and which has had an enduring influence on social conditions, has engendered a sudden proliferation of academic publications pertaining to socially underprivileged groups. Although this tendency toward ever new studies on the "Dalits," "Other Backward Classes," etc. has persisted uninterrupted, the question as to how the members of the higher castes, particularly the Brahmins, have dealt with this process of change in the Indian society has received scant attention. Gilles Chuyen's present publication offers a welcome attempt to fill this information gap. It is based on a study which was accepted as a dissertation from the Institute of Political Science at the Aix-en-Provence University, Aix-Marseille III. With his inquiry about the concept of present-day Brahminical identity, his political approach touches a thematic area important to researchers in the Studies of Religions and Indology.

The book is clearly structured: The introduction and a section on Brahmin typology for those interviewed by Chuyen (chapter 1) are followed by the three main sections of his study. In these the author discusses the most important variables of the Brahmin identity construct according to its historical development and its present-day expression (part 1: profession (chapters 2–3), part 2: geographical origin (chapters 4–5), part 3: political presence of the underprivileged (chapters 6–7)). The book closes with some general conclusions, an appendix, which offers more details for some particular interview patterns, a bibliography arranged according to the main themes, as well as a content and name index.

Chuyen begins his introduction (9–32) with a commentary on the meaning and on the history of definitions for the terms caste, *varṇa*, and *jāti*. He criticizes the application of the "symbolic hierarchical system", which these terms involve, to the present Indian society and refers to related discussions pertaining to "orientalism," "cultural imperialism," "brahmanocentrism," etc. With his particular criticism of the holistic caste theory advocated by Louis Dumont, the author identifies himself with those researchers who very decidedly take a standpoint against Dumont's image of a uniform and static society, stratified solely on the basis of a purity principle, and with those who try to disprove this theory by means of historical, as well as case and field studies. So, it is also Chuyen's (repeated)

intention to provide evidence for the dynamic of the system, for the diversity of the caste concept and for the ramified aspects which constitute it, apart from any religious dimension.¹ The focus of his research then, is the political dimension of “caste” and its influence on the diverse Brahmin identity constructs: “The main purpose of the study is to assess the pluralism of contemporary Brahmin identity in the context of the major socio-political debates taking place in the Indian democracy” (24).

Subsequent to some further definitions (e.g. “identity,” “group,” “culture”) there follow a few remarks on method (25–26). No very clear picture illuminates what Chuyen’s procedure is in the empirical part of his research work. The author claims emphatically to have no intention to include a quantitative study with representative results (25, 27). That is thoroughly legitimate. Yet to estimate the strength of his work and the quality of his results correctly, however interesting they are, important information seems to be lacking here. For example, in his introduction Chuyen defines his work as “fieldwork”; but his remarks on method fail to describe the finer details of fieldwork conditions, e.g. duration. In respect to his interview partners, he does justify his selection of members from the urban middle-classes in Delhi, Agra and Chennai. On the other hand, here too, more specific details are needed. For instance, how he found his interview partners and solicited their cooperation and under what conditions he conducted the “non-directive interviews” (location, frequency, time-span).² It would have been desirable had he disclosed his models (guide-lines). His one example — “What does it mean to you to be a Brahmin in India today?” (25) — even as an “open question” is insufficiently precise in the light of his research problematic and hypotheses. It makes one inquisitive (perhaps not his intention) about the other non-political aspects of the Brahmin

¹ The same goal, for instance, has been expressed in articles in a special issue of the journal *Contributions to Indian Sociology*: Gupta, Dipankar (ed.), *The Certitudes of Caste: When Identity Trumps Hierarchy*. Contributions to Indian Sociology, New Series, Special Issue, Vol. 38/1, 2, 2004.

² A broad band of reflections on method are found, for example, in one of the newest sociological studies on the Dalit movement: Hugo Gorringer, *Untouchable Citizens: Dalit Movements and Democratisation in Tamil Nadu* (Cultural subordination and the Dalit challenge 4), New Delhi: Thousand Oaks, London: Sage Publications 2005.

identity structure (for example, religion) which Chuyen however has decided not to include in his study. Furthermore, Chuyen mentions “more focused interviews of Brahmins and non-Brahmins”; yet these are not further mentioned. Particularly positive in this respect is that he draws amply from quotations out of his interview material to support his argument and assigns them to the respective interviewees listed in his appendix, where there is more information on state of origin, place of birth, age, profession, etc.

In chapter 1 Chuyen presents a Brahmin typology for the 69 interviewed Brahmins, based on the degree and manner which each individual identifies himself as Brahmin and as Brahmin relates to politics (“Classification of the relationship between middle-class Brahmins and politics,” 33–58). The spectrum of these responses corresponds to the authors anticipated “pluralism,” which he plots along a scale indexing 8 categories. At the one end of his scale stands the individual type for whom self-identity as Brahmin plays no roll, nor has any political implications. At the other end stands the individual type who identifies totally with his Brahmin status and who is most conscious of its superiority and of its political dimensions. Such a finely scaled differentiation, considering the scant number of interviewees, demands a very systematic and detailed interrogation to access the most pertinent aspects, less it appears as an arbitrary categorization.

The three “case studies” which constitute the main part of the study contribute to a more profound understanding of how the degree of Brahmin identification can vary (56). However, just what procedure enabled Chuyen to extract those aspects particularly relevant to the political dimensions of present-day Brahmin identity, drawing from the interview material, remains obscure (27, 55 f.). The first case study (“Brahmin identity and the professional variable”) deals with the influence of profession on Brahmin identity. Chuyen demonstrates the significance of this aspect by the example of Brahmins in the army service. The following historical survey of the Brahmin military tradition (chapter 2: “History of Brahmins and the military. A long-term analysis: from the Vedas” 63–92) covers texts from ancient Indian literary sources, acknowledged and approved of by the Brahmins interviewed, up to British enlisting strategies and to the development of special Brahmin communities (e.g. the Mohyals) and present-day military institutions. At the same time the author refers frequently

to the concepts of “self and otherness,” defined by this military context, as well as to social status. In chapter 3 (“Brahmin identity and the armed forces,” 93–115) Chuyen then evaluates his interview material and concludes that the present-day armed Brahmin identifies to a greater degree with his own secular professional institution than with his caste: “Brahmins in the armed forces are soldiers first” (105). The military norm and value system — duty, communal service (“service before self”), honour, justice etc. — has replaced caste as principle and has estranged them from any theoretical “Brahmin” model. Not in respect to members of other castes do they define their social position but in respect to civilians with comparable status, e.g. policemen, whom they accuse of violence and partiality, among other things. Thus the Brahmin in the armed forces corresponds to Chuyen’s individual type distinguished by his impersonal attitude toward caste membership (56).

On the contrary, the Tamil Brahmin identifies intensely with the Brahmin concept. Chuyen confirms his assumption with the second case study involving a regional aspect (Part II: “Brahmin identity and the regional variable”) and he looks at history for a plausible reason. In chapter 4 (“Brahminism in the history of South India. Medium Period: From the late nineteenth century,” 121–145) Chuyen describes the stages of South Indian anti-Brahmin politics, which was engendered by the privileged status of the Brahmin caste and which led in the course of the 20th century to a reservation policy involving measures that would encourage a positive discrimination of the underprivileged and a negative discrimination of the elite. The psychological, social and economic consequences of this “degradation” would have, according to Chuyen, induced a heightened sense of Brahmin caste consciousness. In the interviews (chapter 5: “Portrait of Tamil Brahmins,” 146–190) the diverse tactics employed to encounter the institutionalized hostile policy are reviewed. Beside the heightened sense of caste, tradition and superiority there was a search for new areas of responsibility (social engagement, cultural advancement, “Indianization” of their children, personal dedication to tolerance, humanism and justice). However, there was at the same time a movement into the private economy or emigration — and this quite frequently.

As the Tamil Brahmins underwent a process of heightened identification they differentiated themselves from the non-Brahmins of their own country and from their North Indian caste colleagues as “the others.”

In order to illustrate the situation in North India, the author examines in detail at the beginning of part 3 (“Dialogues on identity and otherness in the 1990s”) the history and present-day impact of the Dalit and OBC movements and how their strength is founded on opposition to Brahminism and its ideology (chapter 6 “Construction of anti-Brahmin identities by untouchables,” 191–227). As the process of emancipation progressed,³ caste has become an essential element in political discussions involving social justice. Chuyen sketches the diverse standpoints in the beginning of chapter 7 (“Brahmins and social justice: Who are the underprivileged?” 228–258). The reaction of the interviewed Brahmins to a threatening social change have ranged from an emphasis by the better-situated of their caste superiority to a demand for government protection and for a classification as “backward” by the economically worse-situated. Contrary to their Tamil colleagues who preferred individual solutions, the North Indian Brahmins have tended to defend solutions for their political interests as a collective (e.g. “Hindu nationalist movement”), that is, a demand for an exclusive group identity. Chuyen refers frequently to a North-South contrast in light of the reaction pattern he has observed (119f., 248ff., 262, etc.).

In his final chapter (“Conclusion,” 259–266) Chuyen summarizes the diverse factors which have influenced the present-day Brahmin identity constructs.

His thorough research work on the historical circumstances and current political developments which illuminate the crucial stages and social contexts of Brahmin self-identity is the outstanding strength of Chuyen’s study (in view of quantity, his historical interpretations are about equal in number to his interview evaluations). However, his historical analysis cannot suffice as evidence for the fundamental psychological and social dimensions of the development of the Brahmin identity. Should an “identity” theme be central, then very basic definitions and models for identity, group, group conflict, identity crisis etc., supported by theory, are mandatory. These requisites are missing in Chuyen’s study; his observations on

³ A widely comprehensive and recent study handling this theme, which Chuyen could not take into consideration for his publication is his Ph.D. advisors: Christophe Jaffrelot, *India’s Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Lower Castes in North India*, London: Hurst & Company 2003.

pages 22–24 are insufficient. Complex psychological ramifications are implied and rightly, as Chuyen repeatedly points to the enormous importance of the “other” for the realization of self-identity (for example, “identity-otherness-dynamics,” 252). But what psychological and social processes are evident when Brahmins in the armed forces select the police or South Indian Brahmins the North Indian colleagues as comparison groups to define their own identity? What strategies for identity management are already out of the question and why, when Tamil Brahmins choose emigration to the USA and North Indian Brahmins choose social downgrading, demanding recognition as “backward”? What does the choice of tactic imply for ones perception of social structure and of ones place within its frame? An exposition of basic theoretical concepts equivalent to those offered by other disciplines which are intensely concerned with identity issues, like sociology and psychology, would have contributed not only to an improved clarity but also to more confident and perhaps more differentiated conclusions. It would be fruitful for example to see caste identity as a part of the social identity of a person and that this becomes solely under particular circumstances salient and has priority over other (partial) identities occasionally, as assumed in the case of Tamil and North Brahmins, but not in the case of Brahmins in the army service.

Despite the above-mentioned reservations concerning method, Chuyen’s work represents a recommendable and stimulating contribution to studies of present-day India’s social structure. Thus, it is an impressive reminder that a credible analysis can not be deduced from a static and timeless image of caste ideology. And that should hold true for researchers in South Asian studies who are concerned with pre-colonial India, too: “Social status in ancient India needs to be analysed from two points of view, the ritualistic and the economic and political.”

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ANNEMARIE MERTENS

ARMIN LANGE/HERMANN LICHTENBERGER/K.F. DIETHARD RÖMHELD (eds.), *Die Dämonen. Demons. Die Dämonologie der israelitisch-jüdischen und frühchristlichen Literatur im Kontext ihrer Umwelt. The Demonology of Israelite-Jewish and Early Christian Literature in Context of the Environment* — Tübingen: Mohr 2003 (687 p.) ISBN 3-16-147955-6.

The discussion about the monotheism of the Hebrew Bible has been accompanied by the question about “Gods, Goddesses and divine symbols.”¹ This is why, in the last few years, exegetics has increasingly focused on the history of Israelite religion and has tried to describe the development from polytheism via monolatry to monotheism in the Hebrew Bible.² The anthology at hand takes this issue one step further by taking into view the so-called “demons.” The notions “demon” and “demonology” serve as a kind of bracket that keeps together a bunch of quite diverse contributions. The 34 contributions date from an international symposium held in Tübingen in the fall of 2001. The overall focus is on Israelite-Jewish and early Christian literature (as can be inferred already from the subtitle), with an emphasis on canonical and non-canonical scriptures. That is why, after an introductory part on definition by B. Gladigow and A.K. Petersen, we find only 5 contributions on the ancient Near East, but 15 on ancient Israel in pre-exilic, exilic, Persian, and Hellenistic times. The chapters on the environment of early Christianity show a similar weighting: only two articles on the Hellenistic-Roman world, but 9 on the New Testament and gnosis, and two on Judaism after the destruction of the second temple. The volume’s strong point lies less in a historical-religious and systematic treatment of the topic, but more in its comprehensive and detailed presentation of the

¹ See O. Keel and Ch. Uehlinger, *Götter, Göttinnen und Gottessymbole. Neue Erkenntnisse zur Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels aufgrund bislang unerschlossener ikonographischer Quellen* (QD 134), Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 41998. On monotheism see W. Popkes and R. Brucker (eds.), *Ein Gott und ein Herr. Zum Kontext des Monotheismus im Neuen Testament* (BThS 68), Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 2004.

² See R. Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte Israels in alttestamentlicher Zeit* (GAT 8), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck 1996.

relevant material in the Hebrew Bible, the NT and ancient Jewish literature. A thorough discussion of classical texts is offered, from Gen 32:23–33 (M. Köckert, 160–181) and Ex 4:24–46 (W. Hüllstrüng, 182–196) to 1 Cor 8 und 10 (P. Lampe, 584–599). Although the perspective of the history of religions stands back against an exegetical viewpoint, it helps to draw an image of demonology and thus of the anthology's topic.

In this respect, it becomes clear that one cannot speak of demons with regard to the ancient Egyptian (D. Kurth, 45–60) and Phoenician-Punic religions (H.P. Müller, 108–121), just as there do not exist any clear-cut demon figures in pre-exilic Israel. Accordingly, K. van der Toorn (61–83) speaks of an “implicit Demonology” in Babylonian and Assyrian literature, while Othmar Keel (211–238) can find no more than “weak signs for the construction of a strongly dualistic world-view.” Keel here names the decisive point: a dualistic world-view. This is crucial for the emergence of demology — at least if one follows the authors of this anthology. In the ancient Near East, only the Zoroastrian religion has a dualistic demonology (G. Ahn, 122–136). Moreover, in the religious history of Israel, demonology is linked to the evolution of a dualistically stamped world, which is again linked to the theoretical monotheism of the post-exile age (A. Lange, 254–268; H.-J. Fabry, 269–291). Finally, as regards the literature of the Hellenistic age, one finds not only a dualistically structured world-view, but also a clear and richly illustrated presentation of demons, be it in the Book Tobit (B. Ego, 309–317), in the Book of Giants (L.T. Stuckenbruck, 318–338), or in the Book of Jubilees (J.C. Vanderkam, 339–364). Qumran already hosts exorcistic texts (see E. Eshel, 395–415 und H. Lichtenberger, 416–421) that are similar to those characteristic of the New Testament. In part, the contributions differ quite clearly from the classic view on exorcism and demonology in the New Testament (O. Böcher).³ However, the authors place some emphasis on questions concerning the historic Jesus (T. Söding, 519–549; G.S. Oegema, 505–518) which sometimes leads to a rather constricted focus. Accordingly, it is not so much the religious-historical material that is of interest, but the question of what

³ See O. Böcher, *Das Neue Testament und die dämonischen Mächte* (SBS 58), Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1972; *Christus Exorcista. Dämonismus und Taufe im Neuen Testament* (BWANT 92), Stuttgart u.a.: Kohlhammer 1972.

role is assigned to the individual demonic powers in the face of the idea of theocracy. The concluding contribution by G. Stemberger (636–661) shows that demons play only a minor role in classical-rabbinic literature in comparison to Jewish apocalypticism.

This anthology's strong point is its broad presentation of relevant material; its weak point is the lack of clarification of the concepts used. For example, it is debatable whether one should use at all the term "daimon," given its meaning. It is a religiously highly charged term and belongs "into the category of interreligious polemics."⁴ Furthermore, there are no adequate equivalents for this Greek word to be found in another of the ancient languages.⁵ It is thus questionable to apply this term in ancient and non-Christian contexts. It might be more adequate to speak of "Zwischenwesen" or "Mittlergestalten."⁶ Alternatively, one could use it in its original sense within Greek religion, where the term designates "the one who assigns" a fateful instance, and can be used in a way synonymous with *theos* (*Iliad* 3, 418–20). In consequence, demons may stand for both gods and lesser spirits (Petersen, 38). The lack of a definition results in a multitude of interpretations of "demons"; consequently, the question of demonology is lost from sight.

Another scarcely discussed issue concerns the function that such "Zwischenwesen" or demons may have. It might have proven fruitful to take up B. Gladigow's approach. In his introductory contribution, he shows that especially "insular monotheisms" require "concurrent polytheisms" to fill in a "religious vacuum" (3–22). A.K. Petersen complements these thoughts by determining the notion of "demon" as a discursive entity that serves as a bridge between two otherwise inaccessible worlds (23–41). Such a functional notion could be formulated even more pointedly, as was apparently done by religious scholars in the concluding discussion of the

⁴ P. Habermehl, "Dämon," *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* II, Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln: Kohlhammer 1990, 203–207, at 203 (my translation).

⁵ J.K. Kuemmerlin-McLean, "Demons," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* II, New York, etc. 1992, 138–140, at 138f.

⁶ For this, see G. Ahn, "Grenzgängerkonzepte in der Religionsgeschichte. Von Engeln, Dämonen, Götterboten und anderen Mittlerwesen," in G. Ahn and M. Dietrich (eds.), *Engel und Dämonen. Theologische, anthropologische und religionsgeschichtliche Aspekte des Guten und Bösen*, Münster: Ugarit-Verlag 1997, 1–48.

symposium (for accompanying documentation of the latter, see xi–xiv). Here, it was again B. Gladigow who asked “how far religion was controllable by the narrative acronym ‘demon’” and, “at what point was a traditional religion no longer capable to give sufficient explanations, so that demons were produced” (xii). This raises a point of further interest and possible research. The documentation of the concluding discussion of the symposium shows, however, that the participants rather put emphasis on the question of ontology and the “actually experienced background” of demons. For example, H.P. Müller took up a thesis of the Hellenist G.J. Baudy that “the demon in its form of an animal of prey is a projection of the predators of the early man “(xi), and K. van der Toorn ascribes the idea of demons to the general human fear of an unpredictable and uncontrollable fate.

In sum, the anthology offers a huge amount of material, which is easily accessible through the extensive indices (665–687). The attentive reader will find interesting cross-connections, apart from information on special questions (Satan: Fabry, 276–289; Lilith: Van der Toorn, 67–71). Not only the ‘P’ tradition (M. Baucks, 239–253), but also Josephus (R. Deines, 365–394) places the demonic within man himself and sees demons as elements of different and dangerous religions in Deuteronomy (U. Rüterswörden, 197–210) as well as in Tertullian (H. Cancik, 447–460). However, more far-reaching systematic questions concerning exegetics are not posed, except for the already mentioned contributions of Gladigow and Petersen and the questioning of conceptions in individual articles (O. Keel on the concept of “demon,” 211f.; R. Deines on “exorcism,” 268, annotation 10).

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BRIGITTE LUCHESI AND KOCKU VON STUCKRAD (eds.), *Religion im kulturellen Diskurs / Religion in Cultural Discourse. Festschrift für Hans G. Kippenberg zu seinem 65. Geburtstag / Essays in Honor of Hans G. Kippenberg on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 52) — Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter 2004 (xix, 649p.) ISBN 3-11-017790-0 (hb.) EUR 178,00.

German (speaking) Religionswissenschaft has recently undergone a generation shift following the untimely deaths of Hans-Joachim Klimkeit (1999) and Fritz Stolz (2001), and the recent retirement of some other prominent exponents of our discipline, including Burkhard Gladigow (Tübingen), Michael Pye (Marburg), and Hans Gerhard Kippenberg (Bremen). Kippenberg, a former editor of this journal, stands out as one of the more internationally renowned German scholars of religion. Kippenberg also owes much to the Dutch academic milieu, having worked in Groningen for several years in the 1980s. Consequently, this Festschrift published on the occasion of his 65th birthday, presents an almost equal mixture of contributions by German and non-German (mainly American, but also Dutch, Swiss, and Israeli) scholars. All the contributions by German scholars are written in German, while the remaining papers are in English. Interestingly, Luther H. Martin is the only scholar contributing to this Festschrift who also contributed to that published in honour of Michael Pye. This fact is a telling sign of the heterogeneity and diversity of the discipline in Germany, not to mention its internal rifts. Unfortunately, although including a recent picture of the honouree and a selected bibliography, the editors do not provide any bibliographical information on Kippenberg — not even the date of his birthday is disclosed — or any clues as to his academic genealogy. To compensate for this, many of the contributions take up threads from his oeuvre or follow up projects in which he was involved as a colleague, mentor or supervisor.

Three papers (all by German contributors) can be placed within the “visible religion” project that Kippenberg was instrumental in launching while still at Groningen. Hubert Cancik discusses Talmudic ideas about “alien images,” arguing that they are a paradigm for the reciprocal perception of religions in antiquity, that “alien images” could be perceived as both a tempting reward and a hostile threat; and that the attitudes

displayed in the two Talmudic treatises range from pragmatism to aggressive denial (287). Peter Bräunlein makes an attempt to meet the challenge represented by the so-called “iconic turn” in the study of religion. He convincingly argues that this challenge requires a radical rethinking of the interdependencies of text, image, and action; and that images and visual practices constitute, convey and emotionally strengthen a specific type of knowledge (225). Sabine Offe, the author of an insightful book on Jewish museums in Germany,¹ points to the threefold religious heritage of museums (574) — namely (a) that churches, temples, monasteries, and other sanctuaries can be regarded as museums *avant la lettre* since they assembled different sort of curios and because they are used as museums by modern tourists; (b) that many museums contain loot and booty obtained by robbing churches, monasteries, and other religious institutions; (c) and that museums are cultic spaces in their own right. She illustrates the historical affiliation and transformations from “sacred space” to “profane” museums with three examples: Boullée’s 1783 concept of a museum, Schinkels 1830 “Altes Museum” and Liebekinds Jewish Museum in Berlin.

A number of papers share Kippenberg’s interest in the modern age. I found Herrmann Schulz’s paper on cultural and religious pluralism in the modern age difficult to make sense of, despite the apodictic tone. In his characteristic way, Gary Lease reflects on the ideas of the theologians John Henry Newman and Charles Davis. Shmuel Eisenstadt employs his concept of “multiple modernities” to reflect on the “far-reaching reconstitution of the religious component in new modern settings” (337), while Hartmut Lehmann discusses the advantages and disadvantages of the concepts (or historiographical models) “secularisation,” “transformation of religion,” and the “return/revival of religion.”² Anthropologist Karl-Heinz Kohl begins with Karl Marx’s prediction that the destructive powers of capital would cross national borders. In actual reality, however, the globalisation of Western capitalism and technology did not lead to a complete Westernisation of the world. Kohl distinguishes between three forms of

¹ S. Offe, *Ausstellungen, Einstellungen, Entstellungen: Jüdische Museen in Deutschland*, Berlin and Wien 2000.

² See also H. Lehmann, *Säkularisierung: Der europäische Sonderweg in Sachen Religion*, Göttingen 2004.

“ethnic” reaction to the process of globalisation: “kulturelle Nostrifizierung” (the generally unconscious appropriation of elements of foreign cultures, for example cargo-cults), cultural reconstructions (the emphatic recovery, reinvention, and revitalisation of blocked or suppressed traditions), and what he terms the “fundamentalist reduction” (the quest of returning to the “pure origins” of one’s own tradition).

As is often the case with this type of book, the volume contains a number of “predictable” contributions. Wolfgang Schluchter follows up on his previous studies of Max Weber’s work on ancient Judaism (with important remarks on the implications of the often misunderstood concept of “Entzauberung”); Robert Segal presents yet another paper on Tylor (this time challenging Kippenberg’s reading of Tylor); Hans Penner again draws on the holistic theory of semantics in order to offer the advice that “to know the meaning of a myth is very simple; just read it” (164); and Ivan Strenski undertakes both a “plain” and a “between the lines” reading of Hubert and Mauss’ *Sacrifice*. Tom Lawson once more promotes the so-called “Cognitive Science for the History of Religion,” while Luther Martin again applies that programme, this time in an effort “to relieve historians and comparativists from seeking cultural data that might explain or model similarities among such universally distributed religious practices as those categorized as “prayer,” by organizing their data according to predictable patterns of human cognition” (124). Martin Riesebrodt (whose book suggesting a new theory of religion is eagerly expected) tackles the issue of universality from a refreshingly different angle: He counters post-modern scepticism of the possible universality of the concept of religion (as it was advanced by, amongst others, Talal Asad) by sketching a “referential” concept of religion that draws on the observation that “religious” actors and institutions recognized each other as such in diverse reciprocal relations, including polemics and competition, syncretism and identifications, and political statements (royal edicts). In order to avoid the criticism that the notion of religion is a modern European construct, Riesebrodt (mainly drawing on older literature) refers to a wider range of pre-modern, non-European religions and events.

In addition to Strenski’s paper, some other contributions that touch upon the issue of sacrifice are grouped in a section on religion and violence. In what I consider a stimulating contrastive essay, David Frankfurter experiments with the concept of *sacrificere* — “the making sacred of something

by (or for) transferring it to a separate, divine realm" (511) — and stresses the often overlooked fact that sacrifice is not only "a process of rendering things to the divine world but, perhaps more importantly, of producing sacred materials for this world in the course of ritual transformation" (513). The processes that he lucidly sketches in his paper, however, have more to do with "sacrificing" (as defined above) than with "sacrifices": the production of consecrated residues from the bodies of early Christian ascetics, saints, and martyrs on the one hand, and various examples for the annihilation and destruction of polluting or monstrous bodies on the other. In another contribution, Jan Bremmer combines some general remarks on modern suicide bombers with pertinent philological remarks on the *Passio sanctorum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, in order to draw some conclusions regarding the motivations of martyrs. While most Islam suicide martyrs are Shiites, Tilman Hannemann discusses the case of religious self-sacrifice in colonial Algeria, i.e. in a Sunni context. (I find it difficult to follow Hannemann when he argues that the actors were guided by a "humanistisch-politisches Ideal" in their actions.) Both Bremmer and Hannemann are concerned with the question of the "motivation" of the martyrs, whereas Kippenberg would, following Max Weber, rather investigate the "subjective meanings" of the agents.³ Lourens van den Bosch provides a religious (myth-ritual) interpretation of the atrocities committed by the Indian "brotherhood" of the Thugs, who would murder travellers from distant regions and "sacrifice" their victims to the goddess Kali. (However, I do not quite agree with van den Bosch's interpretation of the omens, since they not only dispelled doubts and pacified the consciences of the Thugs, as van den Bosch argues, but also created obvious troubles that would require them to transgress the divine commandments, reintroducing elements of contingency.) Moreover, the very idea of a religious basis for Thuggee has recently been questioned and revealed to be an "invention" of the colonial officer Sleeman, as "there is no mention whatsoever of thuggee as a religious practice in material pre-dating Sleeman's involvement in the campaign to eradicate thuggee."⁴ The

³ See H.-G. Kippenberg, "'Consider that it is a Raid on the Path of God': The Spiritual Manual of the Attackers of 9/11," *Numen* 52 (2005) 29–58.

⁴ K. Wagner, "The Deconstructed Stranglers: A Reassessment of Thuggee," *Modern Asian Studies* 38 (2004) 931–68, 953.

only other paper dealing with India is Brigitte Luchesi's detailed report on the erection of a temple dedicated to Śiva in the North-Indian village of Vahisht, to which she has made a series of field-trips in recent years. The report is rich in observations and minute details, but somewhat hesitant in drawing strong conclusions from these.

The contributions of some of Kippenberg's Bremen colleagues and students are as predictable as some of those mentioned above. (Personally, I consider it a pity that these authors missed the opportunity to address an international readership by writing in German.) Offe's study of the museums has already been mentioned above. Jürgen Lott provides some thoughts on the model of religious education developed in Bremen — one of the three city-states in the Federal Republic of Germany — but unfortunately does so without attempting to place this project in an international context. Ulrike Brunotte provides a further essay on "Männerbünde" and ritual theory in the early 20th century as a preliminary study for her recent book on the issue.⁵ Hans-Ludwig Frese insightfully comments on recent transformations of "Islam" in the German diaspora,⁶ showing how young Muslims have finally managed to become part of the core of society, how they develop new forms of political and religious agency and how some "Islamic" organisations assume the character of a civil-rights movement. Bernd Schipper provides an interesting apocalyptic reading of a novel by Günter Grass (*Die Rättin*, 1986) that nicely illustrates how results from the study of the literary genre and discursive styles of apocalypses from antiquity (studied among others by Kippenberg) may shed light on modern literature.

While all these papers focus on Europe, two further papers can be explicitly situated within the emerging paradigm of a religious history of Europe ("Europäische Religionsgeschichte")⁷ which is now being further

⁵ See U. Brunotte, *Zwischen Eros und Krieg: Männerbund und Ritual in der Moderne*, Berlin 2004.

⁶ See also his dissertation: H.-L. Frese, "Den Islam ausleben". *Konzepte authentischer Lebensführung junger türkischer Muslime in der Diaspora*, Bielefeld 2002.

⁷ As a research programme, the concept of a European religious history was formulated by Burkhard Gladigow in a seminal article in the book *Lokale Religionsgeschichte*, edited by Kippenberg and Luchesi in 1995.

developed even outside of Germany.⁸ Christoph Auffarth presents a mosaic of reflections and observations on the Cathars, culminating in his claim that the study of religions in modernity is in need of a systematic comparison with pre-modern and non-monotheistic religions in order to be able to properly describe religion in the modern world (303). In his contribution on the religious innovations initiated by Aleister Crowley, Kippenberg's model student Kocku von Stuckrad argues that "Christianity" and "Paganism" should be considered as discursively interdependent, rather than mutually exclusive, concepts. Furthermore, instead of operating with the notion of "Christianity," he introduces the notion of a "Christian field of discourse" ("christliches Diskursfeld"), which encompasses virtually everything emerging from, or in one way or another referring to, a "Christian semantics" (320). Elegant as that suggestion may seem, it inevitably raises the question what constitutes a "Christian semantics"? Is there a "Christian semantics" apart from a "Christian discourse"? Yme Kuiper's review of Ginzburg's major books and the reactions they provoked is a welcome contribution to the volume, since Carlo Ginzburg's work was prominent in furthering the study of religions in European history, and not just by professional historians. Finally, Gustavo Benavides' essay on Rudolf Otto and Carl Schmitt links historical and theoretical perspectives.

Kippenberg proposed a reinterpretation of Tylor's concept of "survivals," an interpretation that has been challenged by Segal in this *Festschrift*. In what I regard as one of the highlights of this volume, Burkhard Gladigow tackles the issue from a different angle and proposes an alternative term: "anachronism." According to Gladigow, such "anachronisms" — instruments, modes of actions,⁹ and conceptual devices such as metaphors,¹⁰ that are perceived to be older than the respective cultural context (or) — do not occur accidentally, but are part of a strategy that is characteristic for "professional" religion. Less compelling, however, is Gladigow's thesis that this is part and parcel of the specific function of religion in the framework of specialised differentiation of cultural

⁸ Olav Hammer and Tim Jensen (Odense, Denmark) have recently formed an international "Research Network for the European History of Religions."

⁹ E.g. making fire by "archaic" techniques in rituals.

¹⁰ E.g., referring to a God as a shepherd in the context of the industrial world.

sub-systems, and that this process of functional differentiation is somehow reversed in religion. In this line of thinking, “anachronisms” are an *a priori* condition of religion (13).

As a student and assistant of Carsten Colpe, Hans Kippenberg started his career by making some important contributions to the study of religions in antiquity,¹¹ and he is one of the few scholars who master the fields of both ancient and modern religions. Some contributions to his *Festschrift* deal with religions of antiquity. In addition to those already mentioned (Cancik, Frankfurter, Bremmer), Jörg Rüpke contributes a highly stimulating essay in which he illustrates how theoretical insights from sociology and anthropology fall on fertile ground when applied to Roman religion. This time, he challenges modern students to distinguish more clearly between different groups and organisations in Roman religion, including early Christianity. By addressing the questions of secret and public confessions in Christianity and the so-called Anatolian confession stelae, Fritz Graf takes up another thread of Kippenberg’s oeuvre: secrecy in ancient religions.¹²

In recent years, Kippenberg has been increasingly involved in research on religion and law.¹³ In this *Festschrift*, Winnifred Fallers Sullivan¹⁴ ventures to ally herself “with those who believe that a real change has occurred in the last fifty to hundred years — in which the break-up of the colonial empires, the triumph of the market, and the pace of scientific explanation for human motivation, has so eroded the conditions for and the modern confidence in free religion and in the rule of law, that caution at least is necessary when United States power is mobilized to promote their extension” (611).

¹¹ See also his masterpiece *Die vorderasiatischen Erlösungsreligionen in ihrem Zusammenhang mit der antiken Stadtherrschaft*, Frankfurt 1991.

¹² See the volume *Secrecy and concealment: studies in the history of Mediterranean and Near Eastern religions* co-edited by Kippenberg and Guy G. Stroumsa in 1995.

¹³ See the volume *Die verrechtlichte Religion*, Tübingen 2005, which Kippenberg co-edited with Gunnar Folke Schuppert.

¹⁴ See also her recently published volume *The impossibility of religious freedom*, Princeton 2005.

Some of the 32 essays compiled by Brigitte Luchesi and Kocku von Stuckrad are very stimulating and provide a wealth of thoughts and empirical materials. In his lemma on “Festschriften” for the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, however, von Stuckrad has himself pronounced the verdict on this type of volume: “Because a Festschrift is an occasion to honour rather than critique, to which friends rather than academic enemies are invited to contribute, and because articles are usually not peer-reviewed, these collections are of mixed academic quality . . . [F]rom an anthropological perspective, Festschriften tell a lot about the “family relations” within the academic community: Who contributes to a given volume and who does not?” (vol. 5, p. 3041) This review may have provided some such clues. And it may also serve to remind us of the inspiring qualities Hans Kippenberg personified — as scholar, colleague, and mentor.

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